

THE
Fruitless Repentance ;
OR, THE
HISTORY
OF
Miss KITTY LE FEVER.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

Printed for F. NEWBERRY, the Corner of St.
Paul's Church Yard.

MDCC LXIX.

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T H E
H I S T O R Y
O F
Miss L E F F E V E R.

L E T T E R I.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

SHE is found, George, the sweet, the blooming girl could not elude my vigilance.

You may remember you and I met by appointment at the Abbey; a long absence from our native country having endeared its curiosities.

B

To

To view the venerable, the magnificent structure; to contemplate the fate of Poets, Kings, and Warriors, induced us to spend some time in the sacred repository.

Having traversed the isles, we naturally turned our eyes towards the choir: the prayers were just begun.

In that very moment a lovely figure shot by us into an adjacent pew; and exhibited a picture of what we before had only a very faint idea---*the beauty of holiness*---down she knelt with the most becoming humility: her features, her deportment bespoke the pious impulse of her heart, and the incense of devotion ascended from her lips.

Struck with so uncommon an object, we were unable to retire; yet a kind of reverence restrained us from interrupting her by impertinent observation: we felt the awful conviction of the propriety of her adorations: and while we
admired

admired the fair, the finished *creature*, bowed lowly to the wonderful CREATOR.

Never was fascination so grateful ; but it could not last ; the service concluded, we determined to follow her. She perceived, she blushed, she appeared embarrassed at our design, but to prevent the execution of it was not in her power.

The little *saint* descended, however, to play the hypocrite ; for having traced her into a shop, she for some time amused us with the notion that she was housed : when, slipping out at a back door into a street that had a communication with the Park, most treacherously and ungenerously threw us out of our chance.

How we raved, or rather I myself, George, for you was half domesticated even at that period, and your far-fetched respect for your bride-elect, alone confined you from the fallies of freedom.

Did I not vow revenge, and did I not declare, that I could have pardoned any other the most flagrant offence ; but

to charm me one instant by praying, and the next distract me by deceit, was never to be forgiven.

Somuch for your knowledge of the affair. I grant you your memory in general is not very exceptionable ; you must, nevertheless, excuse me, that in this particular instance I have presumed to assist it. To judge a cause properly, it is necessary we should be well acquainted with its every merit : a single deficiency might ruin the whole : and as it was impossible for me to divine the articles in which your relentive faculties might be most defective, I resolved both for your emolument and my own, to present you a full and intire review of that ever-memorable adventure, and will now proceed to its marvellous investigation.

The ensuing morning conveyed you from London, for a purpose, my friend, that perhaps by this time, you are most heartily weary of, and I commenced my literally wild-goose chase.

The

The Park, the Play-house, and the Church, divided my hours, but no light could be obtained, until the honest blundering Goddefs, whom others so cruelly bespatter, threw the blessing into my very mouth, which, for a whole preceding fortnight, I had so successfully sought after.

My humble, but worthy relation, Mrs. Leeson, being a little indisposed, sent to beg the indulgence, as she called it, of one short interview. You are sensible I bear her the highest esteem, therefore need not be told, that I waited upon her immediately.

I found her with her Will lying before her ready witnessed, which she was desirous to lodge in my hands.

It cannot be extraordinary to you, my noble Friend, said she, that at my time of day, I should consider every indisposition, as a warning of my approaching dissolution. Life has most incontestably proved its uncertainty, by the dropping

off of some of the loveliest blossoms of the age: but when it is wound up to seventy years, the case in question, what can be expected, but a speedy termination.

I have, resumed she, after a little pause, been taking a lesson of instruction this very morning. The moral page has for many weeks been spread before me. A Lady sinking under misfortunes, and struggling with disease, is now in this house: she has not the means of procuring the requisites for her support, nor is it in the power of an eminent Physician to relieve her sufferings. Yet piety, resignation, patience, and confidence in that Being, that is able to bring strength out of weakness, have never once forsaken her; what is a common departure at the fullness of age, to the misery she experiences. Your heart, my Lord, is not devoid of sensibility. Can you imagine any thing more beautifully affecting than a fond drooping parent reclining her
head

head on the bosom of the tenderest and most endearing of children; who, forgetful of her own necessities, has not a view or wish beyond affording her help or consolation. The pretty creature has left her but once this month, and then only went to afternoon prayers at the Abbey, and to breathe a mouthful of fresh air in the Park. I know not what would have become of them, had they fallen into less humane hands.

My soul felt the alarm: it must be so: it was the petition of filial tenderness, that engaged all her faculties, and the consciousness of her poverty that incited her to fly from our inquisitive sight.

My countenance in some degree betrayed the agitation I was thrown into, and good Mrs. Leeson, from mistaking the cause, beheld me with apparent approbation; breaking out into a panegyric on the beauties of humanity.

Imputed merit wounds, but can never gratify the vanity of a rational being. Do you know any thing of their connections, Madam? said I.

The story is too long, returned the worthy woman, to give you at this juncture; but heaven, my Lord, has bestowed those good things upon you, which, for wise purposes, it has denied to them; and from our abundance——

It was my wish, it was my intention, Madam, cried I, eagerly catching at the pleasing intimation, will you condescend to become my steward? they would probably decline a favour from the young and gay; that your age, sex, and character would infallibly sanctify.

She received the gift, and extolled the giver: but all impressions, Hendon, are not sterling: I, indeed, compassionate the unhappy, and would relieve the indigent, but to purchase the peace of such a sufferer, my life and fortune should be equally devoted.

I will

I will, said she, convey your benefaction by such methods, and in such proportions, as shall not only most essentially answer their exigencies, but best secure them from the dead weight of an unreturnable obligation.

I played my cards so discreetly, that the old Lady promises me I shall be an eye witness of the sweet effects of charity and beneficence, as soon as the tears of filial apprehension are wiped away.

You know I always visit Mrs. Leeson as a private person, nor am I ever presented to any of her acquaintance, as "*my Lord,*" or "*your Lordship.*"

Every individual ought to be properly attentive to their character, and tenacious of their rank and privileges, to prevent degeneracy in the one, or neglect and infringement of the other.

But in the hour of retirement, in the valuable intercourse of friendship, every bar should be removed: nor have I ever

tasted more true felicity, than in that honest familiarity this innocent deception has encouraged many worthy persons to treat me with.

Let me receive your congratulations by the next post : or I shall begin to suspect you capable of that mean, that groveling passion, Envy.—Your pursuits, poor soul, have attained a final termination ; the nuptial preparations are already completed. But you surely cannot become so furly a cur, as to deny your friend the pleasures you have so sneakingly denied yourself. I shall impatiently expect your reply, as it will destroy or confirm my good opinion of you for ever.

I am most affectionately, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER II.

Sir GEORGE HENDON to Lord CLERAGE.

YOUR Lordship's vivacity will never forsake you: but allow me to remind you, that you was born for nobler purposes, than merely amusing yourself.

I recollect the circumstance you mention: subscribe to every article of the Lady's loveliness, but utterly condemn your pursuit of her. Stop, I conjure you, and listen to the dictates of honour and humanity.

It was evident from her whole appearance, that she was not only the daughter, but the lover of chastity.

I have not so entirely forgot the principles by which I formerly governed myself, but I will acknowledge, that a young fellow is, in some degree, excusable (tho' by no means justifiable) when accepting the bold challenges, or softer invitations of the forward and the vain: but where neither

the one nor the other is conspicuous, it is not only villainous to attempt, but daring and inhuman.

Look into the streets, my Lord, reflect upon the stews. Does infamy want a reinforcement? And is not wretchedness already sufficiently multiplied?

But I will present you with a still closer and more pathetic argument.

The innocent deserving creature you have now cast your eye upon, is so peculiarly circumstanced, that it is impossible to deny her your tenderest compassion. The iron-hand of poverty bears hard upon her. The tears of filial apprehension, to use your own expressions, yet bedew her cheeks. She is the only support of her mother's languishment, the only source of consolation that remains for her on this side the grave. Perhaps too, this worthy parent derives all her misery from the unrelenting stroke of death; the husband, father, the comfortable provision were suddenly torn from her.

All

All these evils, my Lord, may nevertheless be surmounted, unless you can be such a Barbarian, as to prove an impediment.

Virtue, the more it is afflicted, the more it is depressed, at length breaks forth with redoubled lustre; but the rough blasts of vice; the fatal shafts of ignominy, can deprive even pleasure of its charm, and affluence of its various gratification.

You and I ought now to begin to act the part of men: the boy may be giddy, the youth idly, nay cruelly, gay; but the man should be superior to both.

One principle operates pretty equally through the whole species, self-preservation. Shall I destroy my neighbour's peace, yet expect to secure my own? Shall I rob him of his dearest possessions, and no vengeful arm be stretched out to deprive me of mine?

This morning's fun was witness to my union with a woman I have long
loved:

loved: I already begin to feel the injuries I might sustain in the person of my wife; and tremble lest the punishment of my profligacies should fall upon the head of my unborn posterity.

There are but few women of fashion that would not be propitious to your honourable addresses; select her, my Clerge, you think best merits your regard, and give yourself an honest claim to the blessings of society. But the present moment is all you have to depend upon: the prejudice of education, the warmth of youth, and the witchcraft of vice, will prove too powerful for you, if once you behold her face again. She is an ornament to the creation; an honour to her sex. Spare her, therefore, as you wish tranquility to your own soul; for as such an action could alone be perpetrated by the most infernal of monsters, so nothing less than the most infernal stings of conscience, would be the consequence.

I must

I must conclude in your own words :
I shall impatiently expect your answer to
this serious epistle, as it will either de-
stroy or confirm my good-opinion of you,
for ever, and for ever.

I am (conditionally only) yours, &c.

G. HENDON.

LETTER III.

Lord CLERAGE to ARTHUR JOHNSON,
Esq;

READ the enclosed, Arthur, and tell
me (for you are well acquainted with
the occasion of it) whether the surly Se-
neca himself could have more severely
handled a wandering disciple, than this
Sir George Hendon, his harmless, tho'
lively, friend.

One would actually think I had not
only concerted, but communicated a
scheme

scheme for carrying off the bewitching Girl in the first instance; but pardon me, Sir Knight, your ear is not properly constructed to receive so dangerous a piece of intelligence.

You look a little too far into consequences, with your queer apprehensions for the person of your wife, and your unborn posterity, to be the confidant of my amours.

And yet the fellow would have been a very pretty fellow, undocumented by his sentimental father and mother, whom he perfectly idolized. Well: since he has now had the temerity to enter the matrimonial pale, it is the less to be regretted that his vivacity was always in a kind of sanctified cloud.

I will rally him most handsomely, however, for this last stroke of wisdom and conscientiousness, and as he is, with respect to our part in him totally defunct, I shall treat his all-instructive, his all-admonishing

admonishing epistle, as coming from the Elysian Fields.

I have so much business on my hands at present, that you must be satisfied with these few lines: which let me tell you, considering what they convey you from another quarter, will be no marvellous proof of your moderation.

You shall hear from me again so soon as I have worked out my introduction to the sly devotee.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER IV.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

ILL news, my Polly, soon reaches the unwelcome ear.

You must, my dear, bid adieu to those vain, though natural, hopes, that reports have been exaggerated. I thank you for
your

your friendly wishes, your tender anxiety ; and I am grieved (for your sake) to tell you that they are equally unavailing.

It is now several days since I have been reduced to my original circumstances. I am no longer the favourite companion, the idol of a woman of the first rank : but stripped of every unbefitting ornament, every assumed grace, dwindled into the little spruce house-wife, my mother's limited fortune and retired life, require I should become.

I do suspect, notwithstanding all your good-sense, that I shall find you amongst the number of my condoling friends.

It is certainly a bitter calamity, say you, for a young woman in the meridian of her pride and vanity, to be tumbled from so delightful an eminence. And must your Kitty Le Fever be exposed to those shocks and mortifications that await the delicately bred, on a sad reverse of situation ? now that such a variety of methods have been practised to
awaken

awaken sensibilities, that can exist only to torment her? Is it possible she can ever reconcile herself to the cruel change? Or rather will not her future portion be, the sighs of ambition, and the anguish of disappointment?

Suppose we just hear what the young woman has to say upon the occasion.

Born to the happy inheritance of health and cheerfulness, and tenderly cherished by the best of parents, was not her infant state peculiarly blessed. Perhaps it might have been no disadvantage to her to have passed her days in the silence of retreat: but where is the evil from whence good may not be extracted?

Had she not breathed the however dangerous air of greatness, might she not have formed a false notion of its influence? might she not have imbibed that vulgar error, that greatness is alone the walk of happiness? and fatally quarrelling with the substance, have pursued the empty shade.

Mrs.

Mrs. Le Fever's relationship (tho' I believe only in the fifth generation to Lady Catherine Oldham) was the primitive cause of her Ladyship's attachment to her little name-fake.

She indeed thought proper to fly out somewhat extravagantly on the matrimonial transgression of her cousin (though you yourself must acknowledge that to marry a poor officer, the descendant of a refugee, was a transgression of the most flagrant nature) nevertheless, upon due concessions, and the birth of the bantling in question, she received the whole family once more into her gracious favour, and become doatingly fond of the last addition to it.

Kitty Le Fever was now about three years old, and in possession of all those winning arts that steal upon the tenderly disposed, when her father's regiment was ordered abroad.

Mrs. Le Fever (poor romantic soul, as Lady Catherine styled her) was in the bitterest

bitterest distress; her husband, and her child dividing her heart.

To suffer the man she loved to encounter dangers or difficulties, she was unwilling to participate, was incompatible with her character; and to dissuade him from his duty, too unworthy an attempt for her to engage in. Yet her Kitty, what must become of her? could she bear the fatigues of the sea, and the alarming effects change of climate too frequently produce in the constitution, or with whom could she intrust so precious a charge, if she could even prevail upon herself and husband to leave her behind.

I love to recollect the first impressions I received of parental attention. Her Ladyship would often relate the particulars of their departure as a winter's-tale, and you must have patience with my repetition of it, as well as many other circumstances that now suggest themselves in my present melancholy humour.

Lady

Lady Catherine took this opportunity to evince that her friendship was not merely professional: she entertained the little Kitty during a seven years separation from those near and dear relations with the utmost kindness, nor had she ever the slightest reason to remember her loss.

Mr. and Mrs. Le Fever once more revisited their native country: but how shall I describe the raptures of their daughter's heart, when she embraced them: love and gratitude she had long been exercised in, but filial tenderness was an exertion of the soul beyond what ever she had experienced.

Lady Catherine grew jealous, and Kitty was obliged to dissemble what it was impossible for her to feel, a similar affection for her Ladyship, with that she bore her natural parents.

Her punishment, however, followed hard upon her crime. The regiment was again removed into the North, and as
Lady

Lady Catherine was unwilling to part with her favourite, she did not dare to propose leaving her: but languished out many hours in sorrow and mortification, which she was supposed to employ in the greatest gaiety.

Another seven years elapsed, when poor Mr. Le Fever—can I write it?—poor Mr. Le Fever—in defending a fort, left his own family defenceless—he died upon the spot—and I survived to tell it.

My mother (for I can now no longer speak in the second person, drooped and desponded. Lady Catherine pitied her—but pity alone was insufficient to alleviate her afflictions.

Thirty pounds a year is certainly a small pittance for two persons to subsist upon. I was nevertheless so unequal to beholding my mother's declining state, without flying to her support; that I uttered some dissatisfactory complaints against her Ladyship for wishing to detain me.

Words

Words cannot paint her rage. She fetched down her Will, read the contents aloud, and then burnt it before my face. The provision she had made for me was noble, was greatly generous, but could not have preserved my dear mother's life, and I cheerfully forego it. Besides violent as her disposition is, might she not have acted the same part on any other provocation? We will think no more of it.

I am now under a sweet maternal roof, two little rooms, indeed, are all we can boast at present; but I have health, I have ingenuity, and who knows not the happy effects of honest industry.

I shall at worst be sheltered from all unworthy reproaches of obligations, I never sought to incur, and can never repay: I shall be exempt from a repetition of the cruel treatment I have so lately sustained: and though a coach and six, with every suitable appendage is no longer within my reach, if I can but be instrumental to
the

the softening my dear mother's cares, and re-establishing her health, I shall never regret the step I have taken.

I have now no friend left but yourself. How is the circle contracted? But every other attachment was of her Ladyship's forming, and will consequently perish with her departed favour.

Write soon my good Girl, and believe me to be with the warmest affection,

Yours, &c.

C. LE LEVER.

LETTER V.

Miss WINTER to Miss LE FEVER.

MY great and good Girl, do but persevere in your resignation and fortitude, and I shall be more proud of your friendship in your humble, than most exalted situation.

C

But

But I fear it will be impossible for you with all your prudence, your amiable sentiments, to avoid many inconveniences and mortifications. The world, my dear, will never permit such an object to glide on uninterruptedly: the men will admire, the women envy, and you must suffer for both.

Besides, I am convinced you are the most unfit person on earth to struggle through life: you have too much generosity, too great condescension: and will be ever falling a prey to low, cunning, and little-minded deceit: those that cannot descend to suspicion, will ever be betrayed.

That you had but formed some useful connexion, before this evil hour reached you: so lovely, so abundantly meritorious, it is astonishing that you have not met with some happy opportunity of fixing your fortune; though believe me, I would much rather know you miserable in a single, than a married situation;

situation ; for the latter calamity extinguishes even hope itself.

Were I a man—Well : we will not talk of impossibilities—but I am verily of opinion, that was you to bestow yourself otherwise than to my approbation, I should be tempted to renounce my petticoats, to punish the wretch of wretches that could be capable of under-valuing such a woman.

How philosophically you treat of that ne plus ultra (as my father calls it) of every other individual, yclepid riches. It is true, indeed, as Dr. Young observes, “ We can neither dig peace nor virtue from the mine ;” yet we can make but an ill shift, my friend, without a proper degree of this same pelf.

Had her Ladyship—her time was not come, however, and you have been permitted to fall before her, to fill up the measure of her cruelty.

I know not what I write : any thing to relieve the oppressed mind.

You ingenious? who is more so? but must you be industrious in even the last the most mortifying sense of the word? let no one then hereafter repine at the operations of fortune; once at the top, the rapid turn with ensue.

Come and live in the county; money I have none; my father, poor gentleman, loves it a little too well to intrust it to my slippery fingers: but then I abound in the good things of the earth, vegetables, poultry, nay, even joints of meat are in my power: I would engage to furnish you a plentiful table, and for cloaths, your mother's *noble* pension must supply them.

O how do I honor the mad-brained son of Philip, for his generous attention to the surviving relations of his brave Macedonians.

I own it is not possible to provide for the wives and children of every man that may be taken off in his majesty's service: but when so singular a character as Captain
Le Fever's

Le Fever's falls under the public cognizance, whose approved valour, probity, and very many virtues, both martial and social, together with the closing action of his existence, must have so abundantly endeared to every heart; I cannot but wonder that from common justice and common policy, his family are permitted to shrink into poverty and obscurity, when the most extensive advantages might be derived from a contrary conduct.

That a Sovereign is (or ought to be) the father of his people, you yourself will not attempt to deny: but tell me, is it consistent with the paternal nature, to suffer the tender, and most deserving branches of his posterity to wither and decay.

I could pursue the subject much farther, but am sensible it would be to little purpose: for the patriotic spirit you have ever possessed, will not only incite you to acquit your father's Royal Master of all blame, but to consider what I have al-

ready said, as merely the enthusiasm of friendship. Take this, nevertheless, from me, my sweet Girl, that had the English Court, like the great Pharamond's, a gate for the unhappy, and was such a favourite as Eucrate, next the British throne, Captain Le Fever's widow should not be compelled to hide her head in a mean lodging, nor be reduced to accept the donations of charity.

Our Squire is upon the whole a good decent being; there was a time though, when Rome was Rome, my Kitty, that I would not have matched Captain Le Fever's most accomplished daughter, with the best 'Squire of them all. But you must now over-look his want of refinement. He is honest, well-natured, and humane: a little too fond of rural sports; but you may, I doubt not, tame him to your will.

I am serious in what I mentioned with respect to you coming into the country: do you think I would refuse such an
offer

offer at your hands. Pride is in some instances, I grant you, a virtue, but here it would be the most intolerable of vices.

Will you know famine, whilst I enjoy abundance? do not make my plenty a curse, which it will prove without your participation.

I will not forego my request, my injunction: it shall be the test of our friendship, and we will be either wholly united, or wholly separated.

I send this by a young gentleman you have not seen since you was three years old.

He has been bred to the church, which is certainly a misfortune, where great interest, or a handsome patrimony are out of the question.

Young Leceister's case is, indeed, a singular one; his father notwithstanding he could not be ignorant of his own circumstances; brought both him and a daughter up with the expectation of a genteel provision.

Miss Leceister is several years older than her brother, and was on the point of being married to a very worthy person in the neighbourhood, when her father's death gave an unfortunate aspect to all their affairs.

The old gentleman proposed giving his daughter fourteen hundred pounds, upon the strength of which, and his own equivalent capital, the intended husband was admitted into a very advantageous partnership, and the wedding was to have been celebrated the ensuing week.

Instead of which happy event, besides the loss of an indulgent father, they had the affliction to find upon a valuation of his effects, that after satisfying the creditors, there would not remain above five hundred pounds for each of the children.

The distress of the lovers, and in fact the whole family, is not to be described.

The generous brother, however, hit upon an expedient to answer all their wishes (his mother and sister's happiness being

being dearer to him than his own, he mortgaged Mrs. Leceister's jointure, or at least his reversion in it for a thousand pounds, added the stipulated two hundred out of the miserable five, and paid it into the partner's hands before any creature was even apprised of his intention. He then obliged his mother and sister (as cash run very low with them) to accept an equal division of what remained: and having bestowed the one agreeable to her desires, and seen the other comfortably situated: with one hundred pounds in his pocket, and one of the best hearts in the kingdom in his bosom, he is coming to London upon the recommendation of a friend or two to procure himself an humble curacy.

I am satisfied you will entertain him kindly, as well on his own, as my account. He has great merit, and an engaging person: but as his prospects are so unfavourable, your approbation of him must be tempered with discretion.

Adieu my sweet Girl—You remember my resolution—all—or nothing—must I then be for ever renounced?

I am, &c.

WINTER.

LETTER VI.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

MY dear mother has been so severely afflicted for this fortnight past, that it was impossible for me to bestow a moment's attention upon any other object, however tenderly beloved.

Mrs. Stubbs, the good gentlewoman in whose house we are situated, undertook to send you a few lines, to prevent your mistaking the cause of my silence: I hope they have answered the desired purpose.

I have had much both to learn and unlearn at this trying period: the fine lady,
and

and the useful member of society are very opposite characters.

My prayers have been graciously accepted, my endeavours blessed to the utmost, and my dear mother is restored to me from the very verge of the grave.

Some little fatigues, some anxious watchings will ever attend the bed of sickness—but the weak, yet expressive pressure of the feeble hand—the gratefully intelligent langour of the uplifted eye—and the half articulate assurances that our vigilance is soothing to the beloved sufferer, is more than ample compensation. My mother lives, my Polly: lives to thank her child for the offices, the assiduities she had a right to command, and you, who are all sensibility and tenderness, can alone judge of my feelings.

She is now in a sweet slumber: peace and soft repose do not disdain to visit the humble roof. Lady Catharine, Lady Catharine, I hope they have not fled from you to us.

But this moment is my own ; my mother is happy ; and I will be playful : move on, therefore, my pen, with unusual rapidity ; for I have much to communicate by thy means, to the heart of my friend. I will, in the first place, however, speak to the principal subject of your letter.

And is there no other alternative ? accept your proposal, or forfeit your attachment ! Then thus we break hands ! and consign every remembrance of our long continued friendship to oblivion !

O Polly, Polly, how strangely are you deceived in your present calculation ?

You see the tremendous characters above written, are no blacker than the rest ; nor should they prove offensive to your sight, would they be more difficult to erase ? but, be assured, that those that are traced out in the soul, are of so different a nature, that though they may be painfully retained, they are indelible.

Friend-

Friendship, like love, is not free from some little excesses and inconsistencies. A most eligible scheme, truly, have you plann'd : turn thief, for your friend, and reduce her to the criminal standard of a receiver of stolen goods.

I must have the superiority, I find : at present, if we let you tell the story, you are a mere pigmy to me in goodness : and was I capable of accepting your kindly intended (though, certainly, most romantic, offer) it is pretty evident on which side the balance would incline.

I think I can affirm, that, as far as your actual property extended, I would not scruple to be obliged : but you must not over-reach yourself.

Besides we are not so destitute of the means of subsistence, as you imagine : a twenty pound Bank-note was conveyed to us by the Penny-post, in the hour of our greatest need, but where to place the obligation, we are utterly ignorant.

I had

I had many noble friends ; but I concluded that all was at an end between them and me, when I withdrew myself, though on so justifiable, nay so indispensable an occasion, from my once tender benefactress. O had she but been either uniformly cruel, or uniformly kind, my heart had been spared the acutest pangs.

I intended to have laughed with you, or rather at you, by placing your honest generous proposal in a just point of view : but seriousness has seized the reign, and reflection will have its hour.

Once more I am yours.

I cannot enter upon the tender subject relative to that high claim, to consideration you so warmly impute to my mother and me. It is, my dear, in more respects than one, a truly tender subject.

But to silence you in an essential degree, turn your eyes to Lady Catherine Oldham. From her I might have expected a mitigation of the too common fate of the field. She is not surrounded by
num-

numberless sollicitations ; she is not liable to be imposed upon by false reports : nor is she insensible of the disqualification I have derived immediately from her indulgence, to sustain the calamities, to which she has both driven and abandoned me.

You must not, thus, my dear Polly, enervate the mind that is already too weak, by these heart-wounding suggestions.

I am again unable to prosecute my design : and it is your fault, at this moment, that I experience the full recollection of all my misfortunes.

I must chide you for once suspecting that a change of circumstances can have produced so unworthy a change in my sentiments, as to prompt me to accept of a man (if he had an opportunity, and was inclined to offer himself) that you would ever have hesitated to propose to me.

Matrimony is an affair, that I have hitherto bestowed but little attention upon

on: the men, or at least the generality of all those I have ever yet been acquainted with, kindly furnishing me with a strong antidote to approving them; for they have been pleased to find me so *fair*, that they have treated me like a fool.

I have, this day however, been cast a second time, in the way of a young gentleman, that vouchsafes to converse with me in the stile of nature and common-sense. There is a polite ease, yet a pleasing rusticity, if I may so express myself, in his figure and deportment: and I own his address is particularly agreeable to me. Perhaps it may not be difficult for you to guess the man.

I thought you had been better acquainted with human-nature, than to expect discretion in a girl of eighteen. You largely commend the bearer of your much valued letter, yet would prescribe the narrowest limits to my approbation of him.

Ought

Ought you not to have considered how unfit the season of sorrow and softness to resist tender impressions.

The first time Mr. Leceister came to our lodgings, he was shewn into the dining-room, before I was even apprised of his arrival.

He told Mr. Stubbs's servant that he brought a letter from one Miss Winter, which she had enjoined him to deliver into no one's hands, but her friend Miss Le Fever's.

I would not pay so ill a compliment to your injunctions, as not to comply with them; but my features were disordered, and my dress exceptionable; my mother's alarming condition, had called forth many tears, and my heart was replete with unutterable affliction.

I appeared before him: his countenance bespoke the humanity of his nature.

I had no conception, Madam, said he, that my visit was so ill-timed. I have long been a near neighbour of Miss Winter's

ter's and on my coming to London, she was so kind as to intrust me with a letter to procure me an introduction with her second self.

The best of mother's, Sir, returned I, in the best manner I was able, I am upon the point of being separated from the most valuable of mothers. You will excuse my reception of you : the present you bring me intitles you to every civility in my power. I have not been able myself, to make my friend privy to my miserable apprehensions : but she knows them by this time from another hand, since you left the country, perhaps.

He faithfully promised to let me see him at some other period ; and left me with apparent commiseration.

I have been lately informed that not one day passed without his applying to the servant for intelligence concerning us : and he no sooner learnt that my mother was out of danger, than he sent in his name, and best congratulations : and before

fore the end of the week made a personal presentation of them with great politeness.

I believe he staid near two whole hours : his conversation was pleasing and judicious : no lightness, no silly adulation ; upon my word I have not been so agreeably entertained, since I conversed with yourself.

But he is not rich, you say, and, therefore, I am to keep discretion for ever in view : and what have riches to do, I beseech you, with the person, disposition, or understanding. He is a gentleman by his profession : and the fewer favours he can boast from fortune, the more suitable acquaintance he is for me.

I own my education has rendered me somewhat nice in the choice of my company. The gossip's tale, rude mirth, or noisy ignorance, would strike harsh upon my ear. But it cannot be necessary for me to endure such violences. Women in a private situation have it always in their power, at least, to be alone : and
some

some small industry in conjunction with the humble certainty we are possessed of, may support us at once above want and meanness.

We are extremely happy in one particular. An old friend of Mrs. Stubb's, a Lady of family and fortune, has for these eighteen years past occupied the first apartments in her house. You cannot imagine the kindness she has shewn us. She has frequently relieved my watchings in the day time, and furnished us with many comfortable articles: nor should I have been able to devote even a single half hour to Mr. Leceister, notwithstanding all his civility, if she had not condescended to supply my place as head nurse.

Two gentlemen have already pretended that obtaining the *favour* of my hand was their highest ambition. I must beware of the third. The merits of your friend, Polly, are almost irresistible.

The first was much older than myself, illiterate, yet vain of his own endowments.

The

The second, as unexceptionable as the generality of his sex, but my heart would never incline towards him.

Lady Catherine very willingly admitted my objections to the one, nor once condemned my indifference for the other. But the truth was, she loved herself better than either of them, and did not wish to part with me.

Should Mr. Leceister be disposed to make the third, where would now be the impediment? Would not his behaviour, as a child and brother, be an undeniable security for his behaviour as a husband; you need not, however, apprehend any danger from our connexion: I can distinguish, I will approve his worth; but my mind is too equal to experience the violence of any passion.

Take this memorandum along with you, Mrs. Mary, though, that you yourself have cast the snare, and if I should happen to be unfortunately entangled,

tangled, you could not refuse your tenderest compassion, to yours, &c.

C. LE FEVER.

L E T T E R VII.

Sir GEORGE HENDON *to* Lord CLERAGE.

WHIMSICAL unkind Clerage, to send me such an epistle : * sensible as you are, how ill my friendship could support the loss of yours.

You are not, you cannot be a deliberate villain : and mean to protect, what I apprehended you meant to betray.

Our correspondence shall not be interrupted. George Hendon lives, in spite of all your raillery : lives to demand his wonted entertainment : the exertion of your lively humour.

Do I not recollect a thousand instances of your greatness of soul, your humanity

* This Letter does not appear.

and generosity. I am not mistaken: you play off your vivacity merely to amuse yourself, and deserved an eulogium, instead of reprehension.

Go on, my noble friend, but remember how many eyes look up to you for an example, how many hearts beat high with the expectation of your not only inheriting, but practising the virtues of your ancestors, and then tell me if your actions and sentiments ought not to correspond.

Never address me again with such odious stiffness: leave Sir George Hendon to a formal flattering world: and do not forego your valuable familiarity. You are a very young, but I do believe, a very honest fellow: and as such you will ever find me your warmest friend, &c.

G. HENDON.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

O Ho! have I then lashed you into repentance? 'tis well: and you shall find I can be gracious: nor will I suffer my wrath to out-live your provoking spirit.

I begin to think that curiosity is not only born with us, but that it is the last surviving passion of our nature.

Levity, vanity, folly, the small portion, I mean, George, that you possessed of each of them, bled on your marriage-altar.

You who a few months ago was quite as ready as your friend, to head a frolic (provided it had the reputation of being a harmless one) instantly upon your reconciling yourself to Hymen, wage your pen against every species of gallantry: yet are the inquisitive impulses of your soul apparently unsubdued.

Con-

(Continue to entertain you, is your modest demand, with the exertion of my lively humour: or in other words, you cannot suppress your desire of being informed of my flights and fancies, from a double motive; first, that you have naturally an itching ear after my wrong-headed, rattling concerns; and, secondly, that it is the only means of your picking up fresh matter of condemnation, with respect to my conduct and principles. Is not this the fact? and yet, as your extravagant demand happens to correspond with my own inclination, it shall be complied with: for I must confess, that my discoveries (and I have made such as will astonish you, or you are not the fellow I take you for) are but half enjoyed when uncommunicated.

You have heard of Captain Le Fever, how bravely he fell, in defending a fort in the North. This fly deceiver, this all lovely Girl, this honour to her own sex (your epithet) and bane of ours (mine

D

George,

George, every man in his way, you know) is no other than his unfortunate daughter. How many difficulties did he not cope with? but we will not disturb his worthy ashes. A glorious death terminated a valuable life; and the best monument we can erect to his memory, is to preserve his precious remains from perishing.

I wish you could see my heart at this moment, undeformed by vicious hopes, and wholly intent upon restoring this fallen family to their proper condition.

I must have an interview with her. I must be indulged, as good Mrs. Leeson phrases it, with one half hour's conversation. I may surely presume to admire her (though I confess I have no intention, at present, to make a sacrifice of my liberty) do not burst out upon me with such violence: is there no medium then? matrimony or seduction will necessarily be the consequence of our meeting: be it so: for, whatever ensues, I will not
compel

compel myself to forego my flattering resolution.

I perceived there was something uncommonly genteel in her ; the Simpleton, to conceive that a plain dress, which is the best ornament of a beautiful woman, would in any degree conceal her perfections : but it is impossible for you to have any idea of the hard terms on which I am to obtain my introduction : nothing in nature was ever more unreasonable.

They have taken a lodging in the country, and I am required patiently to wait for their return to town, before I have the pleasure of becoming acquainted with them. “ Mrs. Le Fever’s spirits are too weak to admit of the company of strangers, and a month or six weeks will soon pass away.”

When people come to be married, George, or arrive at the ancient period Mrs. Leeson has attained, how sagely, how calmly do they judge of things ; but it is no easy task in the heyday of the

blood to subscribe to such mortifying sentiments: yet this is not only required of your friend, but he must also restrain himself from every appearance of dissatisfaction; lest the good old Lady should take alarm, and for ever exclude him as a dangerous person.

I remember to have seen the sweet Girl with that flinty hearted Lady Catherine before I went abroad, but she was a mere child then.

What a violent and revengeful disposition her delicate Ladyship possesses! she is not to be intreated: She brought her up from her earliest infancy; spared no expence in her education; caressed, encouraged, protected her, until this critical juncture, hah! Hendon, when she has thrown her upon a wide, ungenerous, unpitying world; and under circumstances too, that any man, besides myself, would rejoice in.

But no, Miss Le Fever, your father's blood shall not be shed in vain: it was in
my

my defence he fought, it was my property he secured from the enemy's grasp: he has procured me ease and tranquility, and his darling child shall find a sheltering roof.

Thus every member of the community ought to consider those who died to defeat the attempts of the invader; and the greater the benefit, the greater the tie.

Had she been any other female, you might have trembled for her safety, but poor, honest, brave Le Fever's daughter shall find her security in her very name.

Farewell, thou clumsy advocate for virtue: and know me hereafter for your friend, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER IX.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

TIMES, my dear, are wonderfully altered, my mother's health in great

D 3

measure

measure restored, and smiling peace once more begins to dawn upon us.

We are now at Kensington for the air, and I do assure you Mr. Leceister is our constant visitant; I really suspect, to deal fairly by you, that he is some few degrees more friendly than I could wish.

My mother expresses her good liking of him, in the highest terms: "so modest, "so sincere: believe me, Kitty, he is no "common character: and as those possessions are less frequent, so they ought "to be the more abundantly cultivated "in a masculine breast."

But do not conclude that I am absolutely taken in: I indeed like him better than any other person I have yet met with for many reasons; though by no means in love with him, I do assure you.

Mrs. Leeson has done us the favour to look in upon us many times; she is a charming woman: I hope there are many such for the sake of other unfortunate families; for I am not of that number who conceive themselves marked out for peculiar vengeance.

Afflic-

Afflictions and disappointments are the general lot of humanity : yet there are few that have not many things to be thankful for, tho' they may have many to be dissatisfied with : and those who complain so loudly of an unequal distribution of good and evil, do not properly attend to the various changes, and wonderful turns life affords.

If Mr. Leceister should be so simple : but he can never intend such a thing, his circumstances are almost as limited as my own ; and I have been *too well-bred* to be capable of making a notable wife.

I will, however, hide nothing from you, he has, my dear, been very particular many times, and I have this afternoon engaged myself to walk with him into the gardens.

Shall I trust myself ? it is an enchanting spot ; a second Arcadia ; and may, too probably, contribute to harmonize our souls. Love is the offspring of soft delight ; and I think I will not rashly

tempt my fate : yet how strange to retract from my word.

He is come my Polly, and claims my promise, nor can I wish to be excused fulfilling it.

It was not vanity, my dear Girl, but well-grounded apprehension that would have restrained my giddy steps. Yet the declaration was neither engendered by that incident, nor would have been much longer suppressed, if that had been totally avoided.

I cannot look back to my own foolish behaviour, without mortification : nor forward to the prospects that now break in upon me without dismay. The loves, the graces, the little dimpling Cupids have nothing to do with poverty : and who but the absurd or frantic ever sacrifice to a pennyless Hymen.

I know not what I said, I was so utterly confounded, but I fancy my countenance was not very discouraging.

There

There cannot, however, be any harm in the acquaintance: for as to the bare mention of matrimony, it must be far enough distant.

There is a romantic generosity, an extravagant portion of sensibility, as you once observed, in my composition, that will be my bane. But I could not bear to torture a worthy heart; nor could I ever accept a haughty hand.

The generality of mankind are too narrow in their sentiments for me to chuse to owe them an obligation: and though I am not for a hovel, yet a bare competence, and the man I love, would be my highest ambition. Mr. Leceister's education is unexceptionable: my pride is, in every respect, gratified: his person is agreeable; his manner engaging; and I do suspect we were born for each other, unless you can have the cruelty to forbid the banns.

I am yours, &c.

LE FEVER.

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LETTER

LETTER X.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

FANCY, thou fickle busy Goddess, how irrefrainable thy power, and extensive thy influence upon the human mind? It is thou that accelerates or retards the moments as they pass: from thee the prospects derive their beauty or deformity, and music itself is more or less delightful, as thou art pleased to convey it to the ear.

What a space, what an eternity has one poor month appeared to your unhappy friend! the morning slowly brings on the unsatisfying day: the day is heavily succeeded by the gloomy evening, which at length gives place to the unrefreshing night.

With Miss Le Fever I find things are quite otherwise: her mother's returning health, communicates gladness to her heart; and, you may depend upon it, irresistible

resistible vivacity to her eyes : but she is Le Fever's daughter, George, and you have nothing to fear.

You cannot imagine what endearing terms good Mrs. Leeson and I are upon : on my word, she is no ineligible companion. I was always sensible that she was a woman of excellent understanding : but seventy, you must allow, was an awkward tete-a-tete for twenty-three.

“ That every young nobleman was
 “ but as sober and judicious : what
 “ stronger proof of an amiable disposition
 “ than being capable of spending whole
 “ afternoons in rational conversation : no
 “ cards, no dice, no bottle, no idle jests :
 “ few would believe the report, was it to
 “ be publicly made.”

No, my worthy unsuspecting friend, nor would you find it so extraordinary if you could once penetrate the real motive.

Well might Pope observe that actions do not always speak the man, for on very many occasions we

— — — — — find
"Who does a kindness, is not therefore kind:"

Unfortunate recollection: for does he not tell us, a line or two farther,

"Who conquers bravely, is not therefore brave."

Ah Le Fever! Le Fever! what dangerous doctrine, were I capable of giving into it! as the father's merit is the daughter's security.

But, George, if one was capable of forming designs upon such a Girl as Le Fever, there would be very little probability of succeeding. What most powerfully tempts other females, would be no temptation there: she has been bred in delicacies, has tasted all the delights that affluence can bestow, and greatly scorns them all. Prithee, Clerage, who told you she was so egregious a blockhead?

What, because her humanity was superior to her every other feeling: because
 when

when the last distress, the loss of her mother seemed inevitable, she was not heard to sigh for a coach and six, you are so absurd as to conclude that she has not one spark, either of vanity, or ambition in her whole composition.

I want prodigiously, my dear Mrs. Lesson, said I, one afternoon, to see Mrs. Le Fever: she must be an amazing woman to sustain the shocks of adversity, and the anguish of disease in the manner she has done.

Indeed, Sir, returned the old Lady, there is no describing the merit of her character: I shall take great pleasure in introducing you the first opportunity, and as she will be ignorant of your rank, you will most certainly converse with her to infinite advantage.

And her daughter, my dear Madam, rejoined I, somewhat flyly, we must not forget her: I suppose neither her personal nor intellectual perfections are yet in their full maturity: but she promises, I think

think you say, not to be unworthy of such a mother.

You never, my Lord, returned she, beheld so compleat a creature: I tremble for her future fate: extraordinary merit and extraordinary beauty are ever most unmercifully taxed by an envious world. Providence has, it is true, bestowed a double portion of prudence upon her: but if she happily avoids the snares of vicious and designing men, what can secure her from the little malice of those women she so strikingly excels? I know not how she can dispose of herself: but we ought not to anticipate misfortunes: the hand that formed her what she is, can at all times protect her.

Why, Hendon, cannot you and I become, what we must esteem. Charity and religion can be made to fit every shape. But I beg your pardon; you are at this very writing, what I, (wretched hypocrite, that I am) only preserve the appearance of, and our rewards and punishments

ishments will be proportioned to our deserts.

What can possess me to harass my miserable brain so intolerably about a Girl I have no acquaintance with: for that very reason, George, you understand the infatuation, and I need explain myself no farther.

It is the misfortune of us Lords to be too successful in our attacks: there is magic in the very name, I believe, to every one but the party that bears it. Their little hearts do so palpitate when his *Lordship* vouchsafes to admire them, though his views are less worthy in general, and his appetites more gross than his stable-keepers.

A man of education is an unequal encounter for an illiterate Girl: a handsome figure is flattering, and a large fortune a powerful persuasive: but the uninformed, the weak or mercenary hussy, would not do for me.

Miss

Miss Le Fever would grace the triumph of an emperor: May her guardian angel never nod in a tete-a-tete with so frail, so imperfect a mortal as George Hendon. Yours, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XI.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

HOW can you, my dear Polly, be so surprized and mortified at the connection between Mr. Leceister and me? Was he not the very man to succeed with a woman of my disposition; can you desire I should attain a higher eminence than happiness? and, believe me, if it is any where to be found, it is in the humblest state of independence: just above the frowns of poverty, and infinitely beneath the deceitful smiles of splendor and affluence. But you intreat what you call the disagreeable particulars.

I in-

I informed you of our conversation in the Gardens: that is, I confessed he had made a tender declaration of his affection, and you might guess the rest: the language of lovers is pretty general. We returned home to tea; supped together; and, it seems, he did not go to London until the next morning.

For several succeeding days he repeated his visits with the utmost punctuality. My mother was not to be imposed upon: she examined me touching his professions, and I did not deceive her.

My dear child, said she, it gives me great pleasure to find you so frank and ingenuous: I can have no objection to the young gentleman, if he is able to provide for you: but you have been too delicately bred to encounter the misery of contracted circumstances. It is a formidable step, and requires deliberation. If you could even depend upon passing some few years without a family, the hazard would be less alarming: but it is the natural

tural consequence of the state, and must not be left out of the calculation. How far, my love, continued she, would a curacy go, in supporting four or five persons, and how miserable would your reflections be, when the evil was irremediable? It is my duty to make you sensible of these particulars, but depend upon it, your happiness will always be the grand object of my attention; and your own feelings and discretion must point out to me, the most effectual means of promoting it.

Dear Madam, cried I, greatly affected by her tenderness and goodness, you must not deliver up your child to the regulation of her own weak fancy: you must restrain, you must instruct her upon every trying occasion: and if errors are to be her portion, let them be the errors of duty. I own I approve Mr. Leceister; but, as to matrimony, neither him nor myself, can, at present, have any idea of it: we are very young; our acquaintance
with

with each other, may not be in any degree disadvantageous, as I have not a wish to recommend myself to any other person. Nor is it impossible that this beginning friendship may, on his part, early decline: many things that delight us on a first view, lose their estimation on being familiarized. He has had, as yet, but few opportunities of conversing with me; I could, therefore, be glad if you would so far indulge me, as not to appear sensible of our connection, unless it should be more strongly confirmed; as your not making yourself a party, would enable the young gentleman to make a more decent retreat on any disgust, or fickle inclination. I am rather concerned than pleased at his election of me, though there is not, perhaps, a man living that would have been so eligible to me, from many peculiarities in his taste and circumstances.

My mother, my dear Polly, kindly kissed my cheek, wiped off a falling tear that escaped me involuntarily, and blessing her
poor,

poor, her reduced girl, left her to recollect herself without interruption.

And what do you think was the result? what is very uncommon, I believe, in cases of this nature. I wept to find that what I had expected, nay had been bold enough to hope for, was actually come to pass: but I do not know how it was; it seemed like tearing my dear mother from my bosom, to make room for a foreign guest. In short, it was the folly of childishness, and the workings of simplicity. Thus I, who a few weeks ago was free as air, had no wish beyond the restoration of my mother's health, nor view but the promotion of her happiness, have now given my heart to a stranger, and more than half resolved in due time, to become a dutiful wife.

This duty, however, must never interfere with that I bear another darling object: Mr. Leicester shall, at least, appear to entertain the same tender consideration for my mother, I have ever done: and
our

our mutual endeavours shall be exercised to soften her cares, and enhance her enjoyments. Nor will the lesson be hard to him, that has already given such strong and amiable proofs of filial and fraternal regard. Ah Polly, if you would have secured me from this interesting attachment, you should not have given me those commendatory strokes: such characters, as my mother justly observes, are from their scarceness highly estimable.

Disappointments and adversity are excellent school-masters: with respect to all those little grateful attentions, my dear mother stands in need of: it is suffering alone, that teaches us to feel, except, indeed, in some extraordinary compositions, where the whole soul is, as it were, harmonized, and replete with the most gentle sensibilities.

Under such auspices, what could we fear: that bug-bear poverty consecrated by the maternal benediction would lose its terrors: and we should be convinced
by

by the pleasing evidences of our own senses, how moderate the demands of nature, and in how small a compass the real necessities of life are comprehended.

Perhaps you will call this mere heroism: Nor will I be too positive of the contrary: but you must allow that, at least, distant dangers are not very alarming: he has some few friends to recommend and support him; and, in all probability, long before an union can seriously be thought of between us, he may be enabled to make a suitable provision for me, to the humility of my fortune, expectation, and wishes.

He is to leave London the day before we return to it, to give his relations the meeting at Birmingham upon some business of consequence to their affairs: and I flatter myself that I shall be comfortably settled in some little employment before he revisits us. Never start, my Girl, it is the birth-right of the poor daughters of the Church and Army: only join with me in lamenting that their education

tion is, in general, so cruelly ill-judged.
I am, &c.

C. LE FEVER.

LETTER XII.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

AM I not a clever fellow, George,
to carry every point my heart is set
upon,

The morning arrived that was to complete my utmost desire, I could no longer restrain myself, but dropped in, as if from sudden recollection, upon Mrs. Leeson, who was smirking with an inferior (though, perhaps, more worthy) joy, from the same cause, for she had long sighed for a re-union with her friends.

Suppose, Madam, said I, as it is a very fine day, we were to take a little airing: Mrs. Le Fever cannot come to town without a carriage, and her expences must
have

have run so high during her illness; that it is too probable, it may not be very convenient for her to procure such necessary accommodations; we might take them up in our way, and confer the trifling favour without wounding their nice sensibility.

I listen to you, my Lord, I behold you with admiration, exclaimed the good old Lady: these delicate, these generous attentions to the feelings of the unfortunate, are sweet and amiable emanations of benevolence. It is not sufficient that we relieve the necessitous, but we should suit our benefaction to the state, condition, and capacity of the object, lest while we assist their poverty, we depress their souls. Far be it from me to oppose the execution of your noble wish: we will go, my young friend, and immediately if you please.

It was not for me, you know, to disapprove of whatever so venerable a gentlewoman condescended to propose. A
coach

coach was sent for; and she retired for a few moments to her closet, to thank heaven, perhaps, that so well-disposed a youth existed, as her cousin Clerage.

Well: we ought all of us to be as good as we can: and the best—it is a fearful reflection though, for such sorry varlets as you and I, George: for if the best must remain a remove or two from perfection, what can be said for—but I forget your late reformation of manners and principles, and that I am following your example with all possible expedition.

My dress was plain, and as my features can assume a decent cast upon occasion (did I ever give you a specimen?) I was not without hopes that Miss Le Fever would be unable to detect me for the giddy fellow that traced her from the Abbey. Nor did my good genius fail me in so essential a particular. Mr. Smith passed current for a sober country gentleman,

man, and I could perceive that Mrs. Le Fever eyed him with approbation.

The sly Girl was perfectly herself: my figure, my address, they may not be striking, Sir George, but you must allow me to say, they are not the most exceptionable you ever met with. Miss Le Fever, however, was no more affected by either the one, or the other, than if I had been a plough-boy.

She has been told, I suppose, that languishment becomes her: she sighed once or twice profoundly, her lovely face lost its vivacity, and never was tender sorrow more pathetically expressed.

But what can she now have to disturb her? is not her mother's health restored? is she not returning to a house where every one is prepared to adore her: the cause, George, is sufficiently obvious: her strongest apprehensions removed, she has leisure to reflect upon her own miserable circumstances, and the pleasures she enjoyed in her day of splendor.

Com-

Compose, thou daughter of poor Le Fever, compose thy every anxiety: Lord Clerage's fortune is much superior to the haughty the revengeful Lady Catherine's; whatever it is capable of purchasing, or whatever good offices its master can perform, you may and shall command.

Mrs. Leeson ordered coffee to be brought from a proper house, the young Lady was called upon to preside at the little ceremony, and I insisted upon being the only attendant.

Mrs. Leeson had the *honor* to receive her cup from my hands, but who can describe my happiness in receiving it from Miss Le Fever's. Her fingers are delicately turned, her nails tinged with the softest red: yet has she no idea of displaying them to advantage, nor should I by any other than this accidental means have discovered half their loveliness.

Never was knave more circumspect than myself, lest the good Mrs. Leeson should find me tardy. Your elderly

Ladies, in general, are very shrewd observers; but I may thank the honesty of her own heart for securing me from suspicion.

When once one accustoms oneself to an idle rattling way of writing, it is not easily renounced: but let this, Mrs. Leeson, penetrate the inmost recesses of my soul, I can assure you, Sir George Hendon, that even your own in its present reformed state, could not better sustain the close examination. Compassion, tender regard, and no other the most latent inclination, would be discovered through all its foldings. But suppose we proceed to town. Our coffee dispatched, and our carriage at the door, I offered my hand to Mrs. Leeson, as standing most in need of my assistance. I am sorry, Ladies, says I, that I can serve but one of you: they smiled, curtesied, and followed us.

When we reached the coach however, we made a kind of halt; ceremony is odious, but little tokens of respectful consideration cannot be dispensed with, especially

cially where from disparity of fortune they are liable to misconstruction. Mrs. Le Fever was too well-bred to be troublesome, and we soon drove off in high good humour.

Miss Le Fever's youth, and my sex, cast us upon the same feat: attraction is not to be resisted: my heart strongly inclined, my eyes involuntarily turned towards this powerful object. I, nevertheless, conducted myself with the prudence, the resolution of an anchorite.

With what different feelings, said the good Girl, do I quit this place, to those I experienced on my arrival at it, and the salutary effect the air has had upon my mother's constitution, will ever endear the name of Kensington to my heart.

Happy Kensington, cried my too flip-pant tongue, to be so sweetly commemorated: I, indeed, must forget myself, when I fail to remember that it was at Kensington that I attained the most interesting of my wishes; and its double

merit, shall have double weight in my estimation.

Luckily Mrs. Leeson and Mrs. Le. Fever were engaged upon an important subject, or the warmth of my accent, no less than the expression of my countenance, must have betrayed me: for it was the workings of nature, and the faculties, you know, will be obedient.

What are hours, days, years, in company with those we love: our little excursion was terminated almost in the instant of its commencement: Mount-Street, Berkley-Square is so trifling a distance from Hyde-Park, as not to be worth mentioning.

An humble repast was provided by Mrs. Leeson about two o'clock, alias a dinner: but would you believe it, that little witch refused to participate it: she had two very long letters to write, and begged the indulgence of having a plate sent up to her own apartment.

What

What can be the meaning, Hendon, that we fellows, instead of being disgusted by such whims, are rather doubly attached? Was it instinct in this Chit, think you, in order to torture me, or was it simplicity? it is as impossible for me to discover the real motive, as to secure myself from being tormented by it. And so far was I from repaying neglect with neglect, that I found myself more than ever desirous to cultivate her acquaintance, and recommend myself to her favor.

Have I not already suffered a martyrdom for her sake, in tete-a-tetes with my elderly relation: but judge what a pretty figure I made this evening at whist, with a triumvirate of the same brilliant stamp.

Mrs. Le Fever, has, indeed, the remains of a very fine face: but affliction, sickness, and the revolutions of time have left distinct tokens in each ravaged feature.

Mrs. Leeson's countenance, though almost double Mrs. Le Fever's age, has

many beauties, yet grief and a long succession of periods, have made no inconsiderable attempts to deprive her of every charm; but an excellent constitution, amazing strength of mind, a naturally contented spirit, and an easy fortune, have been powerful opponents; and secured that ever venerable and pleasing aspect from even those devastations, the poor unhappy Mrs. Le Fever's has experienced.

But the third Lady is of a quite different species. A dark complexion, strong lines, and unpleasant brow, are the unfavourable covering of a most valuable mind; to esteem her, you must be acquainted with her disposition and character, and those once known, it is impossible to withhold it.

Some change, however, will soon become absolutely necessary, for if I was to continue this harmless inactive life, my coffers would fill, and my person grow enormous. Do but think of me in my day of probation, dipping into Baker's
Chro-

Chronicle, reading a weekly paper, or old magazine, and closing the evening at brag with good Mrs. Leeson, and Mrs. Leeson's good Landlady.

If the thing was once to get air, I should be unable to shew my face in politer circles ; but I am weary of the beau-monde, and the gambling table never was my taste. Unfatigued by ceremony, undebauched with wine, unperplexed by cares, and unpalled with superfluities, what desire can be ungratified, except the desire of obtaining Miss Le Fever's approbation ? She is now returned to town, George, yet is my penance unremitted : I will be patient, and by following my example, you will at length arrive at the conclusion of this intolerable long letter : only one word more—who can the charming girl have to write to, if male-correspondents—don't be alarmed Hendon, I only mean that I should be tempted to enquire into the merit of their pretensions to such an indulgence : but how shall I procure

so important a piece of information ; the seals, if they were to pass through my hands, should be sacred ; I would only glance my eye over the superscription, and sure so innocent a wish might be indulged. Fortune may be both a whimsical and perverse jade, my friend, but I am persuaded she will bless me with some happy opportunity when I least expect it, in which confidence I will to bed, and should flattering visions deign to visit my pillow, I will receive them as the precious rewards of the forbearance and self-denial I have so long practised. *She* never came down the whole evening ; I hope it will not, however, be the last of our lives ; and if I do not bring her to another kind of behaviour, believe me no longer.

Yours, &c.

CLERAGE.

LET-

LETTER XIII.

From the same, to the same.

A Gain at Mrs. Leeson's, why truly George I may breathe, but I live only when under her roof.

It was about five in the afternoon when I ventured to renew my visit. The old lady was not to be found in any of her apartments.

I am sure, Sir, said Jenny, the good-natured girl you have seen there, my mistress was in the dining-room but this very instant; I fancy she must be stepped up to Mrs. Le Fever.

Jenny, returned I, you are a very good young woman, I have often heard Mrs. Leeson mention you with approbation; and for her sake, if, as in the course of years is most probable you should be the survivor, you shall never want a friend. You have been kind, I understand like-

wife, to the worthy but unfortunate Ladies, your mistresses new acquaintance.

Oh, Sir, said Jenny, (some pearly drops trembling in her not disagreeable eyes) who could refuse to be serviceable to such amiable persons. Mrs. Le Fever had lodged some time in this house before I ever saw the young lady, but one morning, I shall never forget it, she came in the greatest discomposure, flew up to her mother's apartment, and hanging about her neck, cried, it is over, my dear mother, forgive your child this first instance of undutifulness, and all my future actions shall be regulated by your will.

Methinks I hear them now, continued Jenny, it was so moving. My dearest life, replied Mrs. Le Fevre, what have you done, forfeited your last your only friend, and in the moment of your greatest need. I should have suffered but a short period, and then you would have been wholly Lady Catherine's, but who will

will now protect and provide for you when I am no more.

Forbear, my dear mother, cried the young lady, forbear those killing expressions, heaven will be propitious to the prayers and endeavours of filial tenderness. My disposition is better suited to the calamities of virtue, than all the unsatisfactory pleasures that greatness can bestow. Could any thing compensate your loss, lost perhaps by my neglect: let me at least have the consolation of knowing that I was in no degree accessory to the greatest evil that can befall me; then bless your poor child, bless and pardon her, and all may yet be well.

I hope, Sir, you will excuse my prating so fast, said the worthy Jenny, blushing and recollecting herself, but indeed I could talk of them forever.

You have obliged me extremely, Jenny, said I, and I should be glad to hear some farther particulars; but Mrs. Leeson might be surprised to find you and I in
such

such close conversation, unless she was acquainted with the subject. Another time, my good girl, you will not let me find you less communicative.

She curtesied, and looked a little confused: you will take the trouble, Jenny, added I, in the kindest accent, to let Mrs. Leeson know I am here.

Jenny tripped up stairs; and as I was determined not to be disappointed of seeing Miss Le Fever on so fair an opportunity, I followed her steps with the utmost confidence.

Your friends, madam, said Mrs. Le Fever, so soon as Jenny had announced my arrival, must always be acceptable with us; but as you are the best judge of their rank and disposition, I cannot presume to invite them into my apartment, without your sanction: the gentleman does not appear to want condescension.

We shall very probably wait upon you, returned Mrs. Leeson, but I must just
speak

peak one word to him before his introduction.

That you cannot, my good madam, said I, presenting myself, Jenny knows I did not wish to break up, but, if possible, augment an agreeable party. Leisure is the parent of impertinence, but you have so frequently tolerated me, that I cannot despair upon this occasion.

Is it not extraordinary, Mrs. Le Fever, said the harmless Mrs. Leeson, that so young a gentleman, with many gay and valuable connections, can devote so large a portion of his time to the company and conversation of so elderly a relation as I am : but during your absence he was my constant visitant (how charmingly it told George) and I dare say you will have no objection to assist me in supporting my consequence with him.

Where the heart is so well known as I flatter myself mine is, returned Mrs. Le Fever, professions are needless ; I shall always, Sir, be glad of an opportunity of obliging you. What

What we are deficient in, cried Mrs. Leeson, poor unsuspecting creature, Miss Kitty shall accomplish : we will have a song after tea, and instead of the superannuated partner Mr. Smith has hitherto dispensed with, I will recommend this blooming damsel, what say you to the exchange my young friend ?

That Mrs. Leeson has the art, returned I, to render every succeeding visit the most delightful, and the last enjoyed is always liked the best.

A good pretty stroke, George, but failed of its desired effect : the lovely insensible was apparently unmoved, nor even bestowed one inquisitive glance upon the mortified Clerage.

But great enterprizes require great virtues, patience, application, judgment, and perseverance. I have it all compleatly planned, but must be wary in the execution, step by step advances the approved veteran.

Miss Le Fever was called upon in due
season

season for the promised song: I will not overpower you with raptures, George, you know my partiality, and may guess my sentiments. You beheld, you admired the mouth that was formed for my destruction, and may remember how peculiarly every feature was turned, to display and communicate the most exalted admiration. I will only add, that Mrs. Lee-son says, she never heard a more pleasing voice in her life.

Cards were now introduced: is there a more eligible seat on earth, than opposite a fair partner? but Hendon she is fairest of the fair, nor did I fail to avail myself to the utmost of my happy situation: her eyes could not always avoid meeting mine; cold complaisance was no addition to their natural lustre, tho' I could not have wished so much evil to the bitterest enemy I have in the world, as to have been compelled to sustain the dangerous encounter.

She plays admirably at quadrille; but
as

as she observes, it is not the greatest excellence in the female character to make a figure at the card-table ; and yet where it is pursued merely as an innocent amusement, it can be no reflection to discard with judgment, win with moderation, and lose with temper. In short, this one evening has so intirely subdued my whole soul, that was she any other creature (as I have already told you) than Miss Le Fever, you might tremble for her safety, but there you shall ever find me a man of the strictest honour, and

Your sincere, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XIV.

From the same to the same.

I Tell you, George, that a title in many cases is a very inconvenient possession.

A ticket for the Magdalen, Miss Le Fevre had long wished to visit that noble
retreat

retreat for the wretched (no ill omen I hope, but Mrs. Leeson, Mrs. Le Fever, and Mrs. Stubbs, thought it too great a fatigue for them to engage in.

Dare you trust the young lady to my care, madam, said I, to Mrs. Le Fever, or rather will she trust herself, for she is abundantly the least propitious to me upon every occasion.

To convince you, sir, said Miss Le Fever, with a most enchanting smile, how ill-grounded that notion is, I will gladly attend you.

The morning service was disapproved as not being the taste: this piece of folly I forget who suggested it, cost me some impatient hours, but the longest day has its termination.

She was dressed: well we will not enter upon so fertile a subject.

Jenny was so exceedingly delighted, that Miss Le Fever was going to be entertained, that I was in terrible panics
left

lest she should betray the consequence her amusement was of to me.

Behold us now in the coach, for I had many reasons for not handing her as might have been expected: her glove was off, George, and we were surrounded by spectators. I love to play a sure card, unless when some very great advantage may be gained by a slippery one.

You have not lived long in town, I presume, madam, said I, in order to start a conversation, or it would not have been in my power to conduct you to any new scenes.

Your conjecture is very just, sir, returned she, as to my general situation: I never was fond of London, nor would I now reside in it, if my inclination alone was to be consulted. I am surprised, cried I, to hear so young a lady make such a declaration. London is the center of all that is gay and delightful; fine eyes and sprightly hearts seldom doat upon inanimate prospects.

I own, sir, said she, my taste is singular : I have a kind of natural aversion to noise and confusion, which has been greatly increased by observing the errors many people of understanding commit in the choice of happiness. To compel oneself to engage in unpleasing scenes for any extraordinary advantage to either ourselves or fellow-creatures is one thing, and to voluntarily embrace the clamor and disorder of life another. I have seen my acquaintance return from what they have called diversion, worn down with languor and fatigue, with many other astonishing and disgusting particulars.

Sure, madam, you have been accustomed to enjoy fairy scenes, said I, will you favour me with a cursory description of them to enable me to form a right judgment of your election and sentiments.

In the sober, rural walk, sir, within my late inspection, nothing can strike you but what is natural or pleasing.

The labourer, having finished his work,
returns

returns home to repair his waste of strength and spirits with a chearful supper and a sound repose. The day of general rest is considered by him as the greatest of all human blessings ; and having exercised himself in acts of devotion and harmless recreations during that most refreshing period, he the next morning resumes his weekly toil with redoubled alacrity. Disease and discontent seldom find the way to his habitation ; and his wife supplies the want of delicacy and polish, in tenderness and usefulness.

Such are the lower class of mortals at a distance from the metropolis ; and bliss and ease rise by due gradations from the cottage to the man of competence, and so on until it reaches the affluent dome.

Where the circumstances are happy, the mind and body enjoy unutterable delight : to contemplate the all-animating spring ; to behold the ripened beauties of the summer ; to study the moral, the instructive page of autumn ; and to hear
the

the rough blasts of the hoary season, without inconvenience, vice, or dismay. Is it not to be peculiarly favoured ; and when you add the means of diffusing blessings around you, of chearing the heart of age, and assisting the worthy wishes and endeavors of youth, do you not constitute a paradise on earth. Yet this is the never-failing prerogative of greatness ; tho' so little exerted, or even remembered, where the contagion of courts, and the fantastic pleasures of vanity prevail.

I observed, sir, continued she, what listlessness the great experience in the pursuit of what they call pleasure : but how shall I express the misery and wretchedness of the inferior inhabitants of this city. Guilt and disappointment are intolerable, tho' not similar burthens ; and many a worthy heart is oppressed with anguish, by the prospect of sufferings it is unable to relieve : beside what I have mentioned, there is another very severe evil ; most ranks of people outlive themselves ;

selves ; they cannot resist the temptations by which they are furrounded ; and rather than pass unnoticed, they expose themselves to ridicule, censure, and disesteem. The only art of living is to confine our wishes within the limits of our circumstances, be they what they may, or judiciously to resign the rein to every laudable inclination : common sense and common sense, as the poet tells us, are most unquestionably equal ; and if we once adopt the one for our grand regulator, the other will be the infallible result.

What think you now, Hendon, of Le Fever's daughter, or do you not conceive that your friend is in the greatest danger ? I cannot marry at this early period, and I will not betray her, unless I should most unexpectedly discover some ugly feature in her character that tends towards hypocrisy. If she is what she appears, how sweetly amiable ; but should she be a hypocrite, even the Magdalen-house would be

be defiled by harbouring so unparalleled a monster : but perhaps you may have no objection to visiting the penitents.

We reached the chapel in due time : I confess that reflection, rather than conversation, had for some part of the way been my choice. We got a good feat ; the singing was very pretty, but my fair faint complained of the indevotion of the whole congregation.

There seems to be but two sorts of people here, said she, the entertainers and the entertained : I own I do not find the solemnity, the gratitude, the contrition, or pious satisfaction I hoped to have been witness to.

You have been there, George, and can judge of the propriety or impropriety of her observation : but she seeks for that purity of manners, that sensibility of soul, that is not to be found beyond her own breast. How came she to remain so uncontaminated ; Lady Catherine Oldham fees much polite company ; why did not a ray of ambition, a spark of vanity, com-

F

municate

municate itself to her lovely bosom ; but it is adamant in every respect, except when virtue, benevolence, mercy and truth, become the question.

Our awkward carriage obeyed my nod, and I now ventured to assist her tender steps. She withdrew her hand, however, somewhat pertly, conscious, I suppose, of a gentle pressure. The ice is broke, thought I, these little fearful simpletons provoke the very treatment of which they are most apprehensive.

My dear Miss Le Fever, said I, rather familiarly, it can be no new thing to you to be admired ; but perhaps you never met with one so capable of sincere respect as myself, but you must allow me a happiness I have long wished for, but never till this moment had a convenient opportunity of soliciting. I did not wait for a refusal, but with an air at once gay and polite, you observe Hendon, saluted one of the prettiest cheeks in the universe.

She started ; Mrs. Leeson's relation, said she, I could not have expected —

Am

Am I not human, madam, cried I, interrupting her, and are not you —

— A poor distressed girl, returned she, and a very unfit companion for so lively a gentleman. I ought to have known the world better, especially the great world.

You are miserably severe; Miss Le Fever, said I, is greatness and goodness then absolutely incompatible in your opinion?

Ask your own heart, my lord, replied she with the most significant emphasis, whether my severity, as you are pleased to call it, is not just with respect to ninety-nine in a hundred of men of your rank.

Rank and title, repeated your friend, pray what pretensions have I?

Do not attempt to abuse me, sir, whatever were your original motives for concealing your true character, they can now subsist no longer. I know some things of Lord Clerage that are not altogether so much in his favor, as to reconcile me to his acquaintance, under my present circumstances: with persons of distinction, indeed, his merit may be equal to the generality

You astonish me, madam, cried I, (and so she actually did, George) both with regard to your knowledge of my title, and the intimations you have thrown out respecting my principles. Pray Miss Le Fever, for my worthy relation's sake, indulge me with your motives, at least for the latter.

At once, my Lord, to oblige you, and convince you of the propriety of my resolutions, a gentleman that sat behind me at the chapel, betrayed your name, and I suppose you cannot have forgot the poor Innkeeper's daughter.

What a thunderbolt ! but now, George, is it not hard that I should suffer for the iniquity of my brethren ? I must, with shame acknowledge, that I was of the hunting party : dined among the rest at the inn, and heard many encomiums upon the fair *Parthenope* ; but I had not the minutest concern in her seduction, nor even knew the precise time when it happened. As well might the world accuse you of this angel's fall, (if she was to fall
by

by any wicked practices of mine, which heaven avert) because you was privy to my pursuit of her, and half acknowledged intentions, as charge that creature's ruin upon me. I am nevertheless taken with the *cranes*, and in all probability, in this vestal's rigid judgment, shall likewise suffer with them.

I would have said a vast deal to exculpate myself, but she cut me short with,

I do not suppose your Lordship is so poor a sinner, as not to have much to say in your own defence. I wish it may avail you at the most awful of tribunals ; as to me, you may spare yourself the trouble of laboring the point, as your utmost eloquence would be fruitless.

Provoked beyond all patience, I was so unguarded as to curse my companions of that day's excursion.

I hear you, sir, said she, (her countenance corresponding with her expressions) with her ; and if I did not consider you as a seducer, you kindly convince me you are a very prophane gentleman, which

I must be so bold as to say, is but an ugly specimen of a valuable heart.

The coach was now whirling on at a violent rate, and I greatly apprehended would reach Mrs. Leeson's, before my conversion of the little infidel. I therefore put my head out of the window; you rascal, exclaimed I, with a vehemence I have had leisure to repent of, did I not order you to drive slow. This is perhaps, continued I, as I resumed my seat, the only opportunity I may ever have of expostulating with you, as you are so strongly prejudiced in my disfavor, and it shall not be curtailed I insist upon.

O, your Lordship is all goodness, said she, with a sneer, that she must have borrowed; and if I am hereafter at a loss in what manner to conduct myself, I should ill deserve the obligations you now confer upon me.

Miss Le Fever, cried I, seizing both her hands, do not push matters to the last extremity: I adore your person, and honour your sentiments, but I cannot support the

the cruel contempt with which you treat me. I may have been a gay man, but I never yet was the seducer of innocence, nor shall you harbour that opinion of me.

You are very arbitrary, sir, returned she, but till you can make it appear that you have a right to controul my private opinion, I cannot be all obedience.

Your father, the honest, brave, valuable Captain Le Fever, cried I, would neither have dared, nor been inclined to treat me in this manner: he would at least have listened to my justification.

She lifted up her fine eyes to heaven; the monster before her was not worthy of one glance. At length, my Lord, said she, with an averted face, if you knew the father, can you refrain from pitying the unhappy child. He has now no arm to defend me, no means of sheltering my miserable head from the roughest blasts; nor can he die in revenging the injuries his daughter may sustain: he had but one life, my Lord, and that was given to his country.

I beseech you, Miss Le Fever, said I, relinquishing my hold, (she has too much pathos, George) only hear me a few words, I mean not better to my own soul than I do to you. We must not part on unfriendly terms. Mrs. Leeson, Mrs. Le Fever, must not be informed either of your discovery, or our disagreement. I will never offend you a second time, only grant me this request, and let my future treatment be suited to my future deservings.

Do not put it out of my power to oblige you, my Lord, by requesting what I ought not to grant. I abhor secrets; and should I have any from such a friend and mother as you have mentioned, was I capable of such base injustice and ingratitude, what kind of impression would you not necessarily receive of me. To convince you, however, that it is not merely to gratify a talking inclination, but from actual principle, that I am an enemy to reserve, I will not proclaim the conversation that has passed between us, if that
will

will be any satisfaction to you ; and that, my Lord, is an indulgence you had little reason to expect from me.

I was so chagrined, that I pleaded an engagement, and having seen her safe into Mount-street, took an abrupt leave. I could not think of encountering my worthy friends at so mortifying a period, and she must tell her story for once as she pleases.

But she shall hear of me again in a very short time, notwithstanding all her artifice ; and I begin to apprehend that I shall find it necessary, in order to make her sensible of the vanity of human wisdom, to lead even her obstinate virtue astray.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XV.

Sir GEORGE HENDON *to* Lord CLERAGE.

I Cannot restrain myself, O unthinking Clerage, from once more repeating

my (however offensive) endeavors to awaken you to a timely sense of the baseness that is maturing in your late generous heart.

Is it then possible that you can so amazingly degenerate, as to take advantage of unmerited poverty, and add fresh stings to the cruellest of afflictions.

It can be only a false notion of honor, that prevents my apprising the worthy creature of her danger: yet I will forbear; you cannot intend to make a dishonourable attempt, where it is so evident (as even to strike you with conviction) that you would meet with a repulse. My *Lord* will be no object of either admiration or terror with her.

How can good Mrs. Leeson be so infatuated as to become the actual pander to your wishes, sensible as she is of the barbarity of vice, and the greatness of the temptation.

Can I, may I trust you? or rather ought you to trust yourself? I do declare, that so diabolical an action would wholly
 estrange

estrangle my affections, and you would find yourself a prey to the bitterest remorse.

What folly, what madness, persist in pursuing what you cannot wish to obtain: but the chief spur it seems is, the novelty of the chase; you expect, you hope for difficulties; and to divert yourself, can be so cruel as to torture the innocent and unoffending.

But give me leave to ask you, where you intend to stop, and you profess that marriage is intirely out of the question. What conflicts are you then preparing for yourself: if after having fed a growing affection, until it is not only become troublesome, but unconquerable, you are to tear yourself from all your soul holds dear, to prevent the world's arraigning your discretion.

Would the women but properly exert themselves, they might be secure from the grossest of affronts, (except with professed villains) but it is a notorious, tho' very indelicate practice, for a lady one

day to resent the daring proposal, and the next accept of the offender for her husband: whilst the vain-glory of having greatly fought, conceals the ignominy of having been attacked, from the conqueror's observation.

I expected no less from your generous, your pathetic apostrophe, to the poor departed hero, than that you meant to transplant his *blighted* family into a happier soil. They are already allied to nobility, nor can I perceive any thing preposterous in whatever designs you may form with respect to the worthy *Le Fever's daughter*, except such as are barbarous and unjustifiable.

As Miss Le Fever is the present object of your pursuit, I have confined myself to the enforcing her strong and irresistible claim to your honourable consideration: but I must, at the same time, take leave to observe, that a finished form, well-cultivated manners, and delicate principles; will, wherever found, be an infallible sanction for generous approbation. Titles

ties may be purchased or inherited by the most unworthy of the species; estates and immense possessions acquired by the basest, nay the most illiterate of men; but an elegant figure, and a beautiful soul, are so immediately the work of heaven, that it is a kind of sacrilege to attempt to vitiate them; and both cruel and absurd, in such circumstances as your Lordship's, to deny them the highest dignities.

My heat is rather subsiding, and I begin once more to believe that my remonstrances are needless. It is all gaiety of heart, the amusement of an idle hour, or you would not have proceeded by such slow gradations.

Suppose you was to recommend retirement to them, the village, within one half mile of my house, is sweetly rural. I could be a friend to them: my wife would take uncommon pleasure in countenancing and cheering their depressed hearts. Mrs. Le Fever's pension might thus be beat wide, and the blessings of
ease

ease and competence by this means introduced to their humble habitation.

I should not be surpris'd, if in your present humour, this proposal was to incur your censure and ridicule ; but the consciousness of my own integrity will enable me to laugh at your little malice.

Do not, however, desist writing, it is the only chance you have for deliverance in your greatest extremity ; for I may unexpectedly save you from that worst enemy yourself, by an irresistible and judiciously timed stroke of friendly admonition.

Shall we not see you the whole summer ? that would be the severest punishment you could inflict, for any offence you may have received from

Yours, &c.

G. HENDON.

LETTER

LETTER XVI.

Lord CLERAGE to ARTHUR JOHNSON,
Esq;

NOW, Arthur, I am wholly yours :
 I will conquer my weakness for a
 lump of romantic mortality, that would
 sacrifice my everlasting peace to the most
 absurd and far-fetched sentiments of
 honor.

Only read this second lecture from Sir
 George, and you will soon be convinced
 that I have bounded to the utmost verge :
 he will surely blow up all my happy views
 and expectations, if I do not descend to
 write him an epistle upon his own sober
 plan, by the very return of the post.

But pray observe what a compound
 of contradictions and nonsense he has sent :
 first he will awaken me, and then he is
 convinced I am not asleep : this moment
 I am clawed off most mercilessly, and the
 next entreated to spare the gentle victim.
 Then his provoking taunts of the impro-
 bability

bability of my succeeding with her, are they to be supported? but his intimation of betraying the secrets of our correspondence, shocked me to that degree, that I know not when I shall recover myself. Your honest fellows are very useful on some occasions, but dreadfully dangerous on others.

Even poor Mrs. Leeson does not escape his virulence, but I can tell him his language is much too rough for so elderly and respectable a gentlewoman. How prettily he demands may he trust me? ought he to go from home for satisfaction in that particular? and as for his ought I to trust myself, I acknowledge is doubtful. I have my infirmities, Arthur, and am not a Sir George Hendon: but it were endless to attempt a dissection of his absurdities; I will only beg you to attend to his admirable set of reflections, beginning in madness, and ending in torture, together with his disingenuous purpose of inciting me to sacrifice my darling liberty, in order to purchase my freedom.

But

But matrimony is too antiquated and battered a form to captivate your friend, except in the last exigence ; for she must be obtained, let the price be ever so extravagant.

I am so unsuccessful, Johnson, that I cannot help believing there is some secret witchcraft, some covered fraud, that counterworks all my endeavours : it shall be unravelled, let the consequence be what it may.

Death and destruction is it come to this ? to doat upon a miserable, proud, mean female ; doat upon her in spite of inclination, reason, and conviction : it is indeed both torture and madness ; but she must, she shall be mine ; and the puppy that has snivelled himself into her favor, shall either resign her to my prior claim, or I will deal very roughly by him.

But I always begin at the wrong end of a tale ; the cause, not the effect, should be first communicated : yet who can help raving ! no Anthony, no Alexander, was
half

half so weak or desperate. Had I ten thousand worlds, I would sacrifice them all, rather than be deprived of the most finished mortal that ever existed.

O, Johnson, I now begin to feel what I always conceived to be mere cant: fortune, titles, dignities, what do they avail their possessors. A curate, the lowest and most despicable of curates, but I will explain myself more to your satisfaction.

I have not seen this, no name is either too good or too bad for her as she has managed it; enchantresses let me call her; these two whole days miserable enough, you may be certain I have been, by what you know of my impatient and troublesome disposition; and it came into my head a few hours ago, to stroll out and take a view of the house forsooth, that contains the precious girl. I may perhaps see Jenny, thought I, and acquire some intelligence: what! sculk like an eves-dropper, demanded my pride, to be spurned and despised. Haughtiness was natural to some people, and cringing to others; but whatever

ever

ever degree of the former I might have in my composition, I was satisfied I did not possess a single atom of the latter, nor would I so egregiously feed the vanity of any woman, let me suffer what I would.

A gentler passion then assuming the reins, I recollected that it was only some conversation with Jenny, the honest humble Jenny, that I meant to seek after, and I might depend upon her best information: but if she should betray me? betray, what? that I met her by accident, and listened to her prattle:—no, no, trust her for that; it was her own secret, not mine, and I might safely rely upon her.

I went, Arthur, and would you believe it, in the very instant that I reached Mrs. Leeson's door, did Jenny come out with some letters in her hand.

Mrs. Jenny, Mrs. Jenny, cried I, in a low voice, but away she whisked.—The women are all bewitched, exclaimed I, in a rage, only look at them, and they conceive you are going to devour them. I did not, however, let her escape me, but
having

having overtaken her in a convenient place for my purpose, Mrs. Jenny, said I, have you forgot your old friend Mr. Smith?

Bless me, sir, my Lord I mean, returned the fluttered fool, (so Le Fever kept her word with me) I did not see your Lordship, I did not know your Lordship, I was so frightened.

Where are you going, my girl, demanded I in the most friendly accent? who do these letters (and I could scarce restrain my itching fingers) belong to.

Indeed, your Lordship, said Jenny, ought not to tamper with a poor servant, you are not to see them.

Not see them! cried I, in a kind of frenzy, (snatching them in the same moment out of her hands) no noise I beseech you, Mrs. Jenny, I mean no harm to you, your mistress, nor your mistress's friend; but who told you I was not to see them?

No-body, sir, said the poor quivering girl.

How durst you then trifle with me, returned I, a little sternly: do you not know
that

that passion and madness are the same thing ; it is well I was not provoked to use you ill.

O, my Lord : Lord me no Lords, said I, call me Smith, any thing but that mouthful of formality. Have I not always behaved kindly to you ? the last time we met, no person could be civiler or more chatty than yourself ; but now you have set that *Lordship* between us, I suppose I have nothing to expect but silence and reserve.

Indeed, sir, Mr. Smith, returned the poor terrified creature, I will say what you please, I will do any thing to oblige you, only let me carry the letters safe : I promised Miss Le Fever not even to lay them down out of my hands, for fear they should be forgot.

No more of the letters, my good Jenny, said I, I give you my honor I will deliver them myself at the post-house. You must tell me what all the family said to Miss Le Fever's coming home alone on
Sunday,

Sunday, and what constructions are put upon my absenting myself.

Oh, dear sir, pray sir, cried Jenny, don't be angry with a poor girl for wishing to do her duty, only let me go to the post-office with you.

What a fool, said I, do you doubt my veracity? can you suspect I would deceive you? you know who I am, and my character is at stake.

Do but mind her answer, Johnson.

Ah, sir, a servant's character is indeed of the utmost consequence, for if they want a character they must want bread: but people of fashion, I believe, seldom talk of any such thing.

I love you for your simplicity, Jenny, said I, but learn to know me better. Some persons may be so base as to disregard their words, but my word is every thing with me, as you shall be convinced. If you do not hear, my girl, that these letters arrive safe, agreeable to their several directions, then never more trust man, let
his

his protestations be what they may. Will you accept of a pair of gloves?

Indeed, indeed, sir, I will not accept of any thing but your good-will; it shall never be said that I was bribed. Miss Le Fever is all goodness to me; and to be paid on every hand, would be the vilest thing in nature. I have not lived so long with Mrs. Leeson, but I know what goodness means, and would practice it too if I could. I shall cry all night about these letters.

Hold your tongue, huffy, said I smiling, and I will intrust you with a most important secret:—I am in love with Miss Le Fever.

Heaven forbid, sir, exclaimed the good girl: if you could ruin such a young lady, you can do any thing.

I abjure the thought: I love her better than I do myself, and would not injure her for ten thousand worlds.

And will you marry her, sir, demanded the pretty gipsy. O, dear sir, she will make the sweetest of ladies; so humble,

ble, so charitable, so good ; and will you speak for me to live with her, if I should have the misfortune to bury my present worthy mistress. I can work well with my needle, and wash small linen, and—

Yes, yes, Jenny, said I, impatient to change the subject, if I can but once persuade her to have me, I can answer for the rest.

I am so glad, repeated she, with an honest earnestness, then I can have done no harm in parting with the letters : but indeed, sir, you terrified me ; sure you will never be in such a passion with poor Miss Le Fever, she is all gentleness, mildness, and —

Never fear, Jenny, and now won't you tell me all you know ?

La, sir, said she, you have put every thing clear out of my head, I can think of nothing but Miss Le Fever's being a lady : I hope it will not run as glibly off my tongue, as it does over my mind.

Take care, Jenny, that would be to ruin the person you most love.

But

But why, but why, sir, resumed the delighted creature, don't you tell them all what you propose? O dear, it would be such joy to their hearts.

May be not, Jenny, I suspect Miss Le Fever has another lover, and I could not bear to be refused. O falsehood, that ever thou shouldst be so prophetic!

Sure you cannot suspect Mr. Leceister, returned Jenny, in a second tremor, he only brought a letter out of the country; he is most certainly a very pretty young gentleman, and seems to admire (but who does not admire) Miss Le Fever. I never saw any thing particular between them, except when he saluted her the morning she went to Kensington.

Saluted her! wretch, exclaimed Clerage, how dared he even to think of so bold an action: what's his name? where does he live?

Better be any thing, said Jenny, and have the prospect of a little peace, than so violent a gentleman, and be my lady.

And will you tell Miss Le Fever as

G

much,

much, Mrs. Jenny, demanded I, vehemently ?

O, Sir,—

Swear you will never mention me, continued I, taking hold of her hands, but with the highest commendation, or you shall never see her more.

Forgive me, sir, excuse me —

Swear then, cried I ; I am satisfied, by your reluctance to take an oath, you would religiously observe it : swear then this instant, and we will be as good friends as ever.

The trembling timid soul did at length venture to repeat a solemn promise after me ; but I could perceive her foolish heart was ready to burst with terror and obstinacy .

Come, come, my good girl, said I, dry up your tears and compose yourself. To be sure the corner of this court is pretty retired, or what would people have thought of us ? could you have been more agitated, if your very life had been in danger.

Life,

Life, fir, repeated she, rather faucily, I don't know what you mean, fir, if folks honesty is not dearer to them than every other consideration, I think they are not very fit to live : but tho' you have forced me to swear never to speak my worst thoughts of you to this poor young lady, I will never join to do her the smallest injury ; you shall kill me first ; and now I have told you all my mind I shall be much easier.

Well then, my dear Jenny, said I, as we have wasted much time to little purpose, and the family may wonder what has detained you, only promise to meet me on the same spot at half an hour after eight to-morrow evening, and I will immediately go and execute the commission with which you have intrusted me.

Remember, fir, replied Jenny, with a tragical oh in her countenance, that my whole happiness is at stake ; and as you wish peace to your own breast, do not make a bad use of the power you have gained over a simple, honest girl : should

the letters miscarry, I will run away let what will be the consequence ; for I could never bear to be suspected of a practice I most abhor, bribery and corruption. Good night : I am but a poor servant its true ; but if I might go with you to the post—

Be satisfied, Jenny, said I, you shall have no reason to repent your involuntary transgression of Miss Le Fever's request. I will as safely deposite them as you yourself would have done (only gratifying my curiosity with respect to their contents) ; you know there is such a thing as talking aside upon occasion.

My impatience to examine the prize I had obtained was so great, that I turned into the first coffee-house I came to ; and having seated myself in a private box, drew the precious epistles with great caution, tho' much trepidation, out of my pocket.

The first I glanced my eye upon was of *no* concern to me, as I was well acquainted with both the characters, and the

the country correspondent to whom it was addressed. The only friend, I believe, Mrs. Leeson claims besides myself.

The second was from the little traitress to one Miss Winter, her bosom friend and confidant I suppose : but how shall I inform you of what almost blasted my sight in the instant of my beholding it. The third was directed to that very paltry curate I mentioned in the beginning of this letter. I tore open the seal too abruptly, considering I must make it good, and had the *pleasure* to read as follows :

To Mr. LECEISTER.

SIR,

“ According to my promise and best calculation, this letter will greet you immediately on your arrival at Birmingham; for, if I mistake not, you said your business would detain you a whole week upon the road; and if my good wishes have been efficacious, neither fatigue nor dissatisfaction have been your portion.

“ I own I have particular pleasure in the prospect of our correspondence : I know you sensible, and I believe you sincere : there is but one impediment that I can foresee to my utmost wishes and expectations being answered.

“ Why will you not persuade yourself that my friendship is fixed as fate ; that I have been rather suddenly attached I must acknowledge, but approbation works quick upon the soul, and can best be accounted for by your own feelings. As it is not my constitution to be over-warm in any inclination, there is the stronger probability of my permanence. What you call love, you must give me leave to know by the title of esteem : the one depends upon the fancy, the other on the judgment ; and you cannot be offended to have reason concerned on so important an occasion.

“ I cannot help congratulating myself as well as you, that our acquaintance has commenced at the very period it has done. Our characters barely formed, our faculties still unfolding themselves, our minds
unhack.

unhackneyed in the arts of life, and our dispositions, I hope not, uncorrigible: what advantages may we not derive from it. I know the kind of person I could like to spend my days with; and by observing the several changes you are likely to be exercised in, of hope, fear, doubt, and perplexity, I shall not only be enabled to discover, but to soften or invigorate the most predominant, the most irrestrainable, and most worthy passions you are endued with.

“ You seem at present disposed to deliver yourself up to the delusions of fond credulity: I am the most extraordinary of mortals, and we must be happy.

“ I shall not attempt to undeceive you, we insensibly recover our reason when we least expect it: the brightest objects become at length familiar to our sight; and as the glare wears off, or rather as our eyes acquire strength, we are capable of examining those perfections minutely, we once took only in the gross. Enjoy your enthusiasm then, my friend, so long
as

as it lasts; but the moment you perceive it begin to wain, avail yourself of the lucid interval. Weigh well the merits and demerits of your newly-created idol; and should the former actually over-balance the latter, you ought to sit down contented—for remember frailties as well as charms, are the portion of humanity.

“Let us proceed upon a rational plan: your prosperity will be ever grateful to me, your happiness essential to my own; and tho’ you was to cease to be my lover, you should continue to be my friend. The language of sincerity must be pleasing, and the affection of sensibility at all times acceptable: flattery is a meanness in the undefining, and the grand engine of the base and ungenerous; it cannot therefore have any place where truth and faith become the question. In one word, my friend, by ceasing to consider me as a goddess, you would render me a very happy woman.

I shall be glad to hear from you again whenever it is convenient, and hope we shall

shall one day meet to our mutual satisfaction.

I am, sir, &c.

LE FEVER."

Pistols, poniards, with every instrument of death, now danced before my distracted imagination; but recollecting I might be observed, I constrained myself in the best manner I was able, and calling for pen and ink, discharged all that vengeance upon paper, I could ill contain within my own breast: then tearing it in pieces, as an evidence of my folly and extravagance, I once more endeavoured to read the dire confession of the most valuable of hearts.

Don't you observe how prettily she assures him of her best wishes for his ease and safety—had the bottomless pit—but I will be calm. Did you ever before know an instance of a creature's renouncing its natural food, a girl of eighteen disgusted with flattery: it is the very master stroke of affected humility.

She hopes to see the sleek curate again to their mutual satisfaction: but I am no politician if they ever obtain another interview. Plots, perils, every thing shall be undertaken, every thing shall be practised, to prevent so barbarous an union.

How happy I am, Arthur, that your virtue is not so rigid as my much-valued Hendon's. What would become of me, all turbulent as my soul is at present, if I was denied the communication of its workings: but Sir George's life has been as unblemished as his nature is free from exceptions; he knows not therefore to tolerate infirmities, he has never experienced—whilst you from having erred, must compassionate and excuse the errors I am hurried into.

You shall have the particulars that are intended for the confidant, by the next post; I have taken faithful copies of each, but can transcribe no further at this period. My head, my heart aches: it is pride, it is the bitterness of mortification, the violence of love, that thus agitates and distracts me.

Hendon,

Hendon! Hendon! that my heart had but resembled thine in more respects than warmth of friendship, as my days might then perhaps have been equally serene; but it is cowardly to whine at remediable misfortunes; and I am, Johnson,

Yours, as usual,

CLERAGE.

LETTER XVII.

From the same to the same.

NOW pray observe the lady, Arthur, in her unrestrained moments, and judge what an aggravation of my sufferings it must be, to find her at once so amiable, and so averse to every soft inclination, at least where I am concerned.

I have had another letter from Sir George, mine it seems was not sufficiently satisfactory. I must leave London, and find consolation in the bosom of friendship. His expressions are so many daggers to my heart; I feel their energy, but

I cannot yield to them. What shall I fly the field in the hour of danger, leave the lovely girl an easy prey to the meanest of wretches, and abandon her to poverty, and a whole train of insupportable evils. It will not be, and it is a folly to think of it.

Read her own language, and if it is the picture of her soul, you must allow it is a most beautiful one. What do I say? but I shall be intirely reformed in spite of myself; for do I not love, do I not admire virtue for its intrinsic value only? nor can I wonder at all the bustle that is made about it, when it can work so palpably upon a heart that suffers, nay that bleeds from its existence.

I shall never come to the letter, unless I throw it upon you abruptly. To attempt to introduce it with any kind of propriety, is the weakness of frenzy, for does it not contain my irrecoverable condemnation.

Miss

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

“ You must, my dear Polly, you shall be reconciled to my election; for am I not the best judge of my own happiness.

“ Those that have never experienced the folly of greatness, cannot form a proper idea of what they despise : but I have participated all the joys that vanity can bestow, the feasts of luxury, and the emptiness of profusion, yet never did I derive any true felicity from them all. I tell you my disposition is calculated for humble scenes : the slenderly covered table, the neat but plain appearance has infinite charms for me. I know not whether it is from humility or apprehension, but the condition that is least liable to change or interruption, is the only condition that I can approve. Are there any possessions equal to peace and tranquility ? and are they not peculiar to the meek and lowly of heart ?

“ With Mr. Leicester my prospects are quite agreeable to my wishes ; but you
are

are well acquainted with my sentiments respecting him, and I need not repeat them: his merit justifies my partiality; and you shall not withhold your approbation from neither the one nor the other.

“ I must inform you of an adventure I have lately met with.

“ You have frequently heard me express how deeply both my friendship and gratitude are engaged to Mrs. Leeson; never was there a kinder neighbour, or more valuable woman; but she has a relation, my dear; you have heard of Lord Clerage,—he is the man, and a very troublesome and impertinent one I fear I shall find him.

“ He would not be disagreeable in his person, if he was free from self-sufficiency; nor unpleasing in his manners, if he would allow them to be natural; but he has it seems been ruined by the indulgence of his relations, the flattery of his dependants, and the early possession of a noble fortune.

“ He is mighty fond of assuming a private

vate character ; and Mrs. Leeson, who lives but to oblige every person with whom she is connected, was easily prevailed upon to tolerate him in what she believed to be an innocent and rational inclination ; but she is as much unacquainted with his gaieties, as unsuspicious of his artifice.

“ I have not the vanity to think that his whole motive for visiting so good a woman was merely on my account ; but wherever he first beheld me, the novelty of my countenance struck his giddy fancy ; and finding me placed beneath his honourable consideration, incited him to pursue me for the basest purposes. I am, however, surprised at his want of judgment ; the girl that could voluntarily renounce all that fortune, could procure, in order to render herself serviceable to the best of mothers, must be superior to the common methods of seduction.

“ What arts can he play off, that I am not prepared to detect and despise ; and what can he offer, what propose, that virtue and humility would not condemn. Nay, I think

think that, notwithstanding I must allow he has much merit, that had I never seen Mr. Leceister, I could not, on the honestest terms, have approved him. He is so conscious of his own advantages, or perhaps it is my prejudice that gives him that appearance in my eyes, for I must confess that his every word is specious, his every action condescension.

I am now at that very age that invites the cruelest attempts ; and my situation, but it is the only inconvenience of it, conspires to encourage the bold designer : but what are the allurements of vice, that they can be supposed capable of undermining native purity, or what the gratifications of debauchery, that delicacy would not abhor ? is it the midnight revel, the lewd jest, the daring impertinence, or the barbarous insult, that proves the irresistible charm to evil ? Girls, in their state of innocence, can only form an idea of the misery of infamy, from the certainty of its being the very reverse to what they have ever experienced.

“ O

“ O may I always be defended from the horrors and insupportable interruption of a guilty commerce ; but it is preposterous to mention it ; shall my beloved father have breathed his last in a noble cause ? shall he have so strongly, so fatally evinced, how superiorly he valued his honour to his life, and his darling child shrink at a little danger or difficulty, to preserve her person inviolate ? The daughter of the worthy Le Fever submit to prostitution ! I need not answer so self-evident a demand.

“ Is not chastity, my dear Polly, the grand ornament of the female world ? all lovely, all-securing chastity ; for the woman that forfeits it, feels her whole soul, in a short time, contaminated, and ceases to shudder at the commission of the most flagrant crimes : has not even murder been the consequence of breach of chastity ? nay to the eternal reproach of the sex, has not the fallen wretch become the diabolical instrument of trapping the unwary, the artless, and the virtuous, tho’ they

they have borne the outward resemblance of herself? For man to prey upon man, however shocking to humanity, where the name of ambition has been heard, may be accounted for: but the unnatural, the infernal practice in question, can be traced to no other source than the absolute fiend; but I ought to tell you the reason of all these reflections.

“ Perhaps you ask if Lord Clerage has presumed to make dishonourable proposals to me? can you doubt either the presumption or villainy of a man, that could be engaged in such an affair as the destruction of the inn-keeper’s daughter?

“ But I must acknowledge the actual indignity has not yet been offered; yet am I satisfied, that want of opportunity, not inclination, has been the impediment.

“ Has he not made the most alarming advances; stole upon my acquaintance under a borrowed name; deluded me to attend him to the Magdalen-house, (an impolitic expedition indeed) and in our return treated me very unworthily?

“ Mrs.

“ Mrs. Leeson, the only deception I believe she ever practised, gave him to us, on his first introduction, for a country gentleman.

“ His easy address, and insinuating politeness, bespoke him of superior rank. I was sensible he was agreeable, but I was likewise sensible he was confident: his visit happened too to be rather mal-a-propos: my heart was a good deal depressed by poor Leceister's departure; and as I found his eyes rather bold and inquisitive, I resolved to encounter them as seldom as possible. How would it mortify his pride, if he knew that I beheld him as an excellent foil for my unassuming lover?

“ Very little passed that day: my pen employed me in my own apartment, whilst he condescended to *shuffle* and *cut*, with his graver friends.

“ Mrs. Leeson, whose commendation is an unquestionable sanction, mentioned him in such favorable terms, that I at length began to relax the severity of my behaviour; and as I found my reserve
had

had hurt him, and conceived some concessions were due to his valuable relation, I most readily accepted his offer of conducting me into the city.

“ Our conversation was light and unmeaning: compliments on his part, and trite observations on mine, filling up the whole space between our house and the Magdalen-Chapel. We had not been long seated, before a gentleman and lady at some little distance, whispered each other; “ it is him, it is Lord Clerage, I thought I could not be mistaken; that genteel air is perfectly his own.”

“ The whole story of the inn-keeper’s daughter instantly suggested itself to my imagination. For what purposes, thought I, may I not have been conveyed to this place. That poor injured girl was no more suspicious of her approaching fate, when she was deluded from her home, than I of this man’s real name or character, when I quitted mine; but I will conceal the discovery I have so unexpectedly made,

made, unless I find the revealing it necessary to my own preservation.

“ We returned to our coach ; my Lord took my hand with an appearance of the greatest respect ; but judge of my surprise and apprehension, when I found him press it with very impertinent ardor. I hastily withdrew it : he looked politely confident, but suddenly became so bold as to kiss my cheek, with a foolish empty speech that I really do not remember.

“ My father’s spirit was roused in my heart, and I warmly resented his audacious behaviour, when to my utter confusion he called to the coachman to abate his pace, and descended to mutter curses and execrations.

“ He is, my dear, possessed of a fine turbulent disposition. Can I ever be sufficiently thankful that the gentle Leceister, not his boisterous Lordship, is likely to be master of my fate.

“ How guilt confounds even its strongest votaries : I stung him to the quick, by mentioning the Oxfordshire transaction.

He

He would have vindicated himself ; but where is the villain that is willing to pass for one. I, weak and inconsiderable as I am, awed him into silence, and setting me down, his pride or his passion, incited him to withdraw himself from my fight. I blessed the effect, whatever was the cause.

“ My mother and Mrs. Leeson were very piously employed ; they enquired for my gallant.

“ Why really, madam, said I, addressing Mrs. Leeson, he has given me the slip : I discovered from the conversation of some persons that sat near us, that the gentleman has a claim to honors and dignities ; and I think he was disgusted, mortified, and offended, at my treating him with due distinction.

“ I am sorry, my dear Miss Le Fever, said Mrs. Leeson, for the incident ; it is his Lordship’s chiefest delight to converse with his friends upon equal terms. Now will he return to all those wild fallies of youth, from which he appeared to be so
abun-

abundantly weaned, by more sober connections: you must join with me in recalling him.

“O, madam, returned I, (by no means in love with her proposal) let his Lordship follow his own inclinations, he will revisit you in a few days I will be answerable, and he cannot hurt himself much in that time. I wish for your sake it had been otherwise, but I really suspect he has more gaiety in his composition than you are aware of,

“I love his company, said the good lady, but you perhaps behold him with less partiality than I do, nor could I be willing to lose it for a long period.

“Two days have now passed away, and no Lord Clerage, I therefore begin to hope we shall never more be troubled with him. I could forgive him every thing but his hypocrisy to this worthy woman.

“Ill companions may persuade; a heated brain may be hurried into great extravagancies, and even the best principles

ciples for once perverted : but to continue to play the hypocrite, to exult in the basest of impositions, that of sobriety and integrity, is above all things unpardonable ; for to make good the pretensions to those virtues, a knowledge of their loveliness and value, is highly essential ; and to have obtained that knowledge, and not practice them for a better purpose than a vile cloak, the most consummate wickedness.

“ Let us, my dear Polly, ever persevere in the sweet path that is set before us : let us abhor, let us detest vice in every form ; but at the same time let us never fail to pity and pray for even the most vicious, leaving judgment as well as punishment to that unerring power that alone knows where they are justly due.

I am, &c.

C. LE FEVER.”

Am I not an object of compassion, Arthur, and what advice can you bestow upon me ? I am altogether hopeless in
my

my pursuit, yet dare not enter upon the confines of despair.

I must gain her approbation; the curate, how shall we dispose of him; we are not at present, however, reduced to the last exigence.

Come up to town, and let us set our miserable heads to work; your sober, your penitential fit, has been of sufficient continuance. Calling over your brother's hounds can but have ill-agreed with that gay active spirit nature has bestowed upon you, but empty pockets are apt to engender spleen and dissatisfaction; that vile *composition* money went deep, tho', as Sir George observes, it was an ugly business, and you may rejoice that your necks were rescued by any method from the impending load. His friendship too is irrevocably lost; but be of good cheer, the little affair I would employ you in, is of a safer nature, and shall amply heal your shattered finances. Only keep yourself in readiness, and be secret, and you shall find your account in it. I repeat

H

the

she must be mine, tho' so fickle, squeamish, and absurd is my humour, that all-raving as I am to have her in my power, perhaps that very circumstance would instantly restore me to my reason.

To fly me is torture; to consent, I tell you, Johnson, it is all a kind of enchantment; and should I be compelled to marry her in three days time, instead of a goddess—but I will not be prophane. Miss Le Fever is an exception to every rule; and I will venture the dangerous experiment, if nothing less can deliver me from the misery I now endure.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XVIII.

From the same to the same.

THIS Hendon has been again at his old pranks: how has the cause of virtue suffered in his defence of it, yet am I unable to convince him that plead-
ing

ing is not his proper province ; nothing will content him, it seems, but my visiting his gloomy mansion.

Yet so far from condemning me, Arthur, for resolving to bring all madam's fine professions to the test, he surely ought to commend me. Sincerity cannot be called sincerity but upon proof, nor virtue on any other terms, therefore by your leave, Sir George, I shall for once presume to follow my own inventions.

You cannot have forgot my appointment with Jenny : what a wretch would his knightship deem me if he was worthy to be made acquainted with that piece of finesse ; but enough of him for the present.

Jenny and I met, my Johnson, at the time and place appointed ; she all timidity and apprehension, I all gratitude and love.

How does my sweet Le Fever do, demanded I ? has she vouchsafed to mention me, tell me every thing you can recollect ?

I have not seen her since, sir, returned

the provoking jade ; I cannot bear to even look her in the face, until she receives an answer to her letters.

You little simpleton, cried I, are you not yet reconciled to the friendly steps you are taking in her interest ; I tell you she shall be mine, and you shall be her woman.

Lord help me, exclaimed she, in an honest rapture, that ever I should be born for such preferment. I shall be very far to seek at first, tho' I do help both to dress and undress my mistress.

Her Ladyship, you may depend upon it, will be as little troublesome as the worthy woman you have to deal with at present, returned I, to prevent a second catalogue of her performances, breaking in upon me like an inundation ; nor will she be less condescending, besides so tight a lads as you Jenny cannot fail to improve and recommend yourself more and more every day ; but there is one very great difficulty to be got over.

I would not stick at any thing, sir,
quoth

quoth the gentle damsel, in an honest way.

Nor will I ever propose what is dishonest, Jenny, returned your friend. You see how much you are in my power in these private meetings; nay, never tremble child, I am only mentioning what many men would be capable of, but you find your own father could not treat you with more decency or tendernefs, except when you put me in that violent passion, and even then I behaved no worse than most parents do when they are greatly provoked. What I would have you understand, Jenny, is, that I am above base practises, only when I have set my heart so intirely upon a business, I cannot help making use of some little stratagem; you must, you must, my dear Jenny, ask leave to go out on Friday.

What will become of me, cried the silly novice, what would you have me do now? you have a great deal of honour in your mouth, sir, but God only knows the heart; and if yours should be a cor-

rupt one, I shall surely die with misery and repentance.

Prithee, my good girl, said I, do no flounce before you are in danger of being caught, I have sent the letters honestly and truly, (and so I have, Arthur, or my desired purpose could not have been completed) but I must see the gentleman and lady's answer. You need not be afraid of me, I am neither angry nor jealous, it is only a little natural curiosity.

And how, and how, sir, demanded the poor thing, quite out of breath with apprehension, would you contrive it. I think, for my part, that it is as bad a sin to rob people of their secrets as to pick their pockets, and sure a Noble—

Hold, cried I sternly, why will you run the hazard of provoking me a second time: the method I shall take is this; I will send or go to the general post-house before the letters are delivered out, and enquire for such as are directed for your family, then will I have only one satisfactory peep, and convey them to you wherever

ever you please to appoint, and you have but to say that you met the postman at the door in your return.

Well, sir, I think it is true, said the pert huffy, that the old gentleman—I beg your—sir, I beg pardon, but I really was going to say, assists those that follow his wicked ways. I could as soon have built a city, as have thought of such a scheme; consider what faith I have in your principles and goodness, if I do comply with such a proposal.

If you do comply did you say Mrs. Jenny, repeated I a little haughtily, you cannot still forbear offending me. If I condescended to beg that service as a favour, which you have bound yourself to render me, ought you to have esteemed it in that light. Might I not ruin you with all your friends, by reporting what has already passed between us, and yet you scruple to take the most simple step in nature, to promote my happiness.

If you was a bad man, said this Mrs. Simplicity, you would be a most merci-

less one ; but I am convinced (fear Arthur is the strongest of all convictions) you are a very opposite person, and will make no farther hesitation. I will be at my sister's, Mrs. Dawson, Peruke-maker, in Oxford Road ; but you must use great caution, or she will suspect—

That I have designs upon her pretty sister, returned I ; nay, never blush, my good girl, people are so censorious, they will think any thing ; and indeed there are very few men that can be trusted, but you shall find I am not of that number.

This see-saw work between terror and approbation, is the best method of treating your raw intriguers, or the consciousness of their own importance would incite them to become intolerably restive.

I shall be upon tenter-hooks until Friday ; tho' what can I expect, only the cruel amusement of reading the curate's happy heart, and beholding myself miserably traduced by the *friendly* Miss Winter.

Curiosity,

Curiosity, curiosity, is an imperious tyrant, and will be obeyed.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XIX.

From the same to the same.

HERE we have it, Arthur, Mr. Curate's bright epistle ; but I disdain to prepossess you in the disfavour of a fellow, whose presumption must strike you in a proper degree. As for the lady's answer, we will read it together if you please, and perhaps our opinion and feelings may be similar.

To Miss LE FEVER.

“ YOUR good wishes, my dear madam, could not fail of their efficacy ; nor have I any thing to complain of, but the distance that lies between us. To be deprived of your conversation is no light calamity. In company, even with my

most approved friends, and tho' the subject may be interesting or entertaining, your judicious, your tender, your all-enlivening observations are wanting to give it its proper zest. You shall not, my beloved Miss Le Fever, prescribe to me ; I will, I must be rebellious, in the very first instance : reason, prudence, you preach to winds and waves. It is impossible to restrain my feelings within such narrow limits ; not talk of your endowmentt, not contemplate your beauty ; you may call my sincerity in question if you please, but you will, at the same time, impeach your own understanding.

“ To bear your unequalled possessions *meekly*, is the finest stroke of amiable humility ; but to be insensible of their existence, a reflection upon your piety. Shall you be so compleatly formed, yet forget to honour the author of such perfection ? and how can you duely honour him, but by allowing all the merit of his work ? Would you suffer your mind to be so richly furnished, and not present the
choicest

choicest part for a thanksgiving offering? but I know you better than you do yourself; and am well convinced, that every gift is properly estimated.

“ Those blooming graces that inspire every other heart with rapture and admiration, are considered by you as merely fleeting and transitory. You have the temerity, my dear madam, to look forward to their decay; and as decay they must, you are ever prepared to die with them, or *greatly* survive them. It is only where immortality has set its mark, that you can rest your attention; you will persevere in the cultivation and improvement of every virtuous and noble inclination, until nature, no longer able to sustain the weight, the thin veil of mortality drops off, and you ascend those bright mansions, for which you have so industriously fitted yourself.

“ My friends are surprised at the happy alteration in my health and temper. I no longer droop with indisposition, nor am pectulant on trifling contradictions:

fortune, by its propitiouſneſs on a late occaſion, has made me ample amends for all thoſe froward tricks that were wont to prey upon my ſpirits ; and my ſeperation from you has rendered me incapable of being affected by petty evils.

“ Little did Miſs Winter imagine, when ſhe was accuſtomed to entertain me with the enumeration of her friend's merits, that I ſhould ever obtain a precious intereſt in them ; nay, I fear it will prove but a diſagreeable piece of information to her, for humble as ſhe is in her own deſires and wiſhes, there was nothing too great for her Le Fever to poſſeſs. You, my dear madam, can give a ſanction to your every action ; and ſhould that lady employ the ſame eloquence to diſſuade you from your attachment, ſhe exerciſed to prepare me for my fate, will you not generously undertake my cauſe, and teach her to behold me with ſome degree of partiality ? It ſhall be the whole ſtudy of my life to prevent your repenting ſuch great condeſcenſion.

“ I

“ I cannot but apprehend that some passages in this letter will incur your displeasure ; but let me intreat you to submit in such articles as you cannot understand. It is impossible for you to feel the estimation you inspire : you cannot be a judge of that amiable light in which you appear to every beholder ; consequently the profession of the one, and the admiration of the other, may strike you in the false sense of insincerity and adulation.

“ You say you will not contend with me, where you know I am infatuated. I thank you for your kind toleration, but you must extend it to the permitting me to follow the genuine dictates of my heart.

“ I think only of you, speak of no other being, and if I am forbid introducing you into my epistles, my pen and ink would be intirely useles : but you are much too good to require impossibilities.

“ You know nothing of this country ; my friends are so unfortunate as never to have seen you — what then could I say to you ? That the village is dreary and unpleasant ;

fant; the sun clear and bright; and that all my acquaintance are dressed in smiles; yet that I, —self you see cannot be kept out, tho' even that darling idol would have been unthought of, if your absence had not made me sensible, that there can be no felicity without me.

“Continue those valuable wishes to me, that have already proved so beneficial on many occasions. They have inspired me with confidence, resolution, and patience; for the man that knows himself honoured with your friendship and approbation, and fails to acquit himself with spirit in every honorable enterprize, must be unworthy of you; and whatever beauty there may be in humility, or unbefittingness in vanity, I cannot but allow myself a large degree of merit, so long as it is given me to subscribe myself,

My dear madam, yours, &c.

P. LECEISTER.”

Let us turn our eyes from the pedant and the coxcomb, to my very good and chatty friend Miss Winter.

To

To Miss LE FEVER.

“WHAT do you tell me? Lord Clerage mean you dishonourably; it is impossible: no, no, my dear, he is only fetching a compass, in order to recommend himself to your favor, and you shall be Lady Clerage.

“I have enquired into the merits of that charge you bring against him. You do him the greatest injustice imaginable: all his acquaintance, the girl’s father, acquit him of being, in any degree, concerned in that wicked transaction.

“I love modesty I hope as well as yourself; but I confess I have not all those punctilios that are known only to the polite world. If his Lordship did salute you a little abruptly, he might not mean you all the incivility you seem to apprehend. I think you was wrong not to give him a hearing; or as I am weak enough to wish you had, I would fain condemn you.

“Yet you must be right; Lord Clerage
cannot

cannot plead the privilege of a country gentleman ; he has been bred in the midst of decorum, and ought not to have committed a breach of it, especially with one so critically situated, and whose prudence could not but be alarmed — tho' to be Lady Clerage — and he is allowed by every body to be a very pretty gentleman.

“ How unlucky I am to have cast Mr. Leceister in your way : why was you so fudden, so premature, in your attachment to him ? it is nevertheless exceedingly ungenerous to reflect upon him, for he wants nothing but an estate to render him as eligible as any Lord Clerage in the kingdom.

“ I own I have no opinion of your love matches : difficulties and anxieties may stifle even the strongest flame ; and you see many persons that were to have lived and died for each other, fall into wranglings and dissensions, on finding themselves reduced to the misery of contracted circumstances.

“ I will give you my sentiments more largely

largely, when I am released from my present confinement. My father is much indisposed with his old complaint, but I hope the worst is happily over. I have, on this account, been obliged to write at stolen periods. Pain and impatience are no uncommon companions; you must therefore excuse my conciseness, and allow me to say, that Lord Clerage would be my man, if Leceister was not yours: but as matters are, I can only pray that you may not be permitted to incur so trying an evil as a thankless husband, or ever become so unfortunate as to experience the wretchedness of poverty.

“I am so well acquainted with your disposition, as to be satisfied, that if you could meet with a lord and master that possessed a bare competence, and admired and loved you as much as I do, you would be blessed in a very tolerable degree, tho’ not quite equal to the wishes of my dear Kitty’s, &c.

M. WINTER.”

A

A pert, knowing hussy : hah, Johnson, and very rationally disposed to plead the cause of love and fortune. She would have no objection to whirling up to town in her *Ladyship's* coach and fix I suppose : she has, however, done me an essential piece of service, by exculpating me from that base imputation, and I shall ever honour her for it.

Poverty you find, even by her account, is a very bitter calamity. O may her friend but feel its utmost weight by anticipation, Arthur, and fly into my sheltering arms.

It is a very easy matter to talk heroically ; but to act agreeable to our professions, even my faucy mistress would be convinced a most difficult task. My heart is devoted to her in spite of all her loftiness, and we must spend our happy days together.

Don't you admire the *Priest* ? his stile is many degrees stiffer than an *Easter band* : how will he tremble at so formidable a rival ? but what said my impertinent ?

ment? "I was a foil for her gentle youth."

Do I not owe her recompence: I am pretty punctual in general in my rewards and punishments, and to be unjust to her, would be the highest species of injustice. I must away, Arthur, Jenny will wait for me, and it would be cruel to make her suffer for our indulgence.

I will make Mrs. Leeson a visit to-morrow; and by the reception I meet with, I must determine my future regulations.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XX.

From the same to the same.

I Have made my visit, Jenny let me in. O, sir, said she, they all wonder they have not seen you for so many days, that is my mistress and Mrs. Le Fever.

Now this is what you call exalting a man, only to debase him. My heart bounded at the beginning, but heavily subsided at the conclusion of her speech.

Never

Never did I see age to such advantage. Pleasure can smooth the most wrinkled brow, and benevolence grace even a toothless mouth. Mrs. Leeson's reception of me was always obliging, but this time it was peculiarly so.

I was afraid, my Lord, said she, that now you could no longer personate the private gentleman, you had intirely forsaken us ; but Mr. Smith had secured Lord Clerage the most heartfelt approbation,

I hope your friends are well, madam, said I, bowing to her compliment ; I had not the confidence to pronounce the name of Le Fever.

You shall pay your personal honors to them, returned the worthy woman ; we will spend this afternoon with them, if it is agreeable to your Lordship, to convince them that no incident can change our opinion of them.

I had so much command of myself as not to betray my consciousness of the little satisfaction they would derive from my visit, and Jenny was dispatched to inform them of our intention.

The

The girl is very unfit for her present employment; she returned perfectly dancing upon one leg, for joy that they would be glad to see us. Was Mrs. Lee-son any other woman than the one she is, she would infallibly detect the whole intrigue: the fool does so fiddle, simper, and appear full of her own consequence, and her love for Miss Le Fever; I must give her some better instructions at our next meeting.

We went up stairs: Mrs. Le Fever received us with her usual complaisance, which had so large a portion of gratitude in it, as to be sufficient for any rank; and so little fawning or servility, as to be acceptable to every heart.

The young lady's behaviour was agreeable to the good-sense she is mistress of; abundantly too reserved to be encouraging, and infinitely too pleasing to be forbidding; she would actually make a very pretty Countess.

Nor do I see where the impossibility lies, Arthur. Lady Catherine certainly brought
her

her up with an intention to bestow a good fortune upon her, and it strikes me that my honorable addressee would reconcile all parties.

But the priest—well, what of him? he is beneath my consideration, therefore can never excite my apprehensions; for depend upon it we should know how to deal with him, when once I have resolved to make an absolute sacrifice of my beloved liberty.

Tho' to confess the truth, I am greatly afraid it will be necessary to remove him for a time at least; whilst he is upon the spot, madam will be inaccessible. I would not injure him in any essential degree; I feel myself but a puling half-fledged villain; but as I cannot exist without Miss Le Fever, self-preservation will incite me to make some desperate push. Can you not assist me; have you no one device to deliver me from so execrable a rival; exert your utmost abilities, and only send me word my wishes are accomplished, and you shall make your own terms.

Btu

But to return to my visit—

I cast many tender, and as I intended penitential glances, upon the lovely girl, but she had the address to appear wholly insensible to every thing but politeness, and wished me a good night with the same ease and respect as if I had been her grandfather.

What different materials different females are composed of: some girls—but it is a folly to talk, Arthur, they are not Miss Le Fever's, and their forwardness is quite as disgusting, as her shyness is irresistibly captivating.

I am glad I have hit upon so happy an expedient for carrying my point; Lady Catherine will warmly promote my cause, and the dear creature must yield.

Her seduction was an infernal plot: for if an inn-keeper's resentment could rise so high, Johnson, on the ill-treatment of his child, might not the brave Le Fever be expected to break from his grave, to revenge his daughter's violation? but no, Le Fever, thy daughter's heart, not her virtue, is my present game. You

You are sensible you are not to stir a step without orders, nor even then hurt a single hair of the curate's curling pate; you shall take a tour together, and the moment I have effected my grand purpose, whirl home again in safety.

Hendon too will be reconciled to this unavoidable piece of dissingenuity, when he sees how happy I make my Le Fever, and how well I will provide for her quondam favorite.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXI.

From the same to the same.

FOrever in luck, Arthur, sure the happiest of planets presided at my nativity.

Passing negligently through Mount-street, (I have already expatiated on the power of attraction) I saw a hackney coach drawn up at Mrs. Leeson's door, as for some important purpose. My

My heart—well no matter for its palpitations—I resolved to keep a sharp look out, and inform myself of the cause, I therefore immediately slipped into a little glove-shop that commanded a view of the premises, and lay as snug as possible.

It was not long before Mrs. Jenny appeared, leading her old mistress, who was no sooner seated, than Mrs. Le Fever and Mrs. Stubbs followed her into the carriage, and the fellow ascended the box.

The good old lady kindly drew up the blind between her and me, to defend herself, I suppose, from a little misty rain. I took advantage of her caution, and catching Jenny's eyes, made her understand she was not to retire until I had spoke with her. The wretch of a coachman was some time figgetting about, before he thought proper to draw off the enemy, a circumstance that exercised my patience not a little.

Every obstacle at length removed, I advanced. Jenny, child, cried I, no words;

words ; but if Miss Le Fever is at home, I will see her.

She is indisposed, sir, said the little hussy, in great confusion, she is busy ; the ladies are only gone to the Fleet, to procure the enlargement of a poor tradesman out of this neighbourhood.

I will, Jenny, returned I, secure you from all blame : their charitable business will detain them at least some hours. I stole up you may say, whilst you exchanged a word or two with an acquaintance that passed by, or what else you please.

When I reached the landing-place of the second stair-case, would you credit it, Arthur, I was astonished at my own impudence : I paused, I hesitated, but it would have been unmanly to retreat ; and tapping gentle at the door, I received such soft encouragement, that I ventured to present myself.

Miss Le Fever blushed : pride and haughty resentment mantled on her cheek, and sparkled in her eyes. To tell you I am surprised, my Lord, said she, in a lofty unfriendly accent— Give

Give me leave, Miss Le Fever, cried I, (who would not have interrupted her?) to save you the trouble of saying uncivil things. To see me at this juncture, I am very sensible is no agreeable circumstance with you; but I die for some conversation with you; my business is of the last importance, and you must indulge me.

She rang the bell; a dirty two-fisted wench made her appearance.

Susan, said she, (not in the snappish manner in which she accosted me) do you wait in the next apartment until I call for you; I have very particular reasons for what I desire.

And do you put yourself upon your guard, madam, said I, as the wench withdrew?

You must excuse me, sir, returned she, very tartly, you have already transgressed the bounds of good-breeding, and I am justified in every suspicion.

It is well, madam, extraordinary lessons may be learnt from even excess of deli-

cacy, and over - strained caution. I should not have had one dishonourable wish, one improper idea, if you yourself had not suggested them. (She gave me a heavenly glance) You know, continued I, you have treated me with great disrespect, charged me with the grossest practices. Indeed, Miss Le Fever, I cannot sit down contented with unjust imputations.

You are a gentleman of very tender feelings, (that ever the prettiest mouth in the world should be capable of sneering) where self is concerned, but have the least consideration for the pain you may excite, of any person I ever met with. My mother is from home ; your visit had certainly been better timed, if she could have participated it. I, however, must beg to know, what account I am to give of your proceedings when she does return.

O tell her, my dear madam, cried I, that I am young, bold, and enterprising ; that I love her daughter to distraction, and have sought many occasions of telling her

her so, but have always been thrown out by some absurd interruption or other; and that seeing a whole coachful of impediments removed, I rushed in, seized the happy opportunity, divulged the secret, and O, I fear, you may add, was scornfully repulsed.

I neither wish, nor intend to attempt penetrating your Lordship's designs, returned the fair heroine, it is sufficient for me to know I have no power over my heart or person; you may be incredulous, (my looks will be significant, Arthur) but they are actually disposed of.

Never tell me, Miss Le Fever, so preposterous a tale; the puppy that is now in possession of your approbation, has not loved you half so long as I have—you remember the Abbey.

Then it was to you, sir, said the unmoved tyrant, and some of your gay companions, (a stroke for Hendon) that I was indebted for that day's discomposure; upon my word I am more obliged to you than I imagined.

Take care, Miss Le Fever, cried I, scorn and contempt would rouse a Socrates : I am not naturally a madman, tho' it is in your power to render me one ; and if you are determined to drive me to extremities, I hope you are prepared to answer for the consequences.

Patience and resignation, my Lord, I believe, are virtues that you have but little acquaintance with ; and I should be equally sorry to find myself engaged to prevent, as to answer for the extravagances you may be capable of committing ; but when I assure you that I am already disposed of, given to a worthy young man of suitable circumstances to my own, it is surely hard that I may not be allowed to *starve* in peace, if I am so singular as to make the election.

No, madam, exclaimed I, with great vehemence, I will spare no pains to disappoint your romantic wishes : let the curate perform his drudgery, he will barely obtain sufficient to procure himself clean linen and a scanty dinner.

Do

Do but hear how unmercifully she wiped me down.

That reflection, my Lord, is unworthy your character, humanity intirely out of the question: that one part of the clergy should be wrapt in lawn, and the other exposed to the greatest hardships, is an error in ecclesiastic regulations that ought to be rectified. The dignity of that profession extends to its meanest members; and tho' the curate may feel distress, he must not descend to industry for relief. To preach one day, and labor the next, is denied him, notwithstanding he experiences miseries from the former, from which the latter would intirely extricate him. If it was not too great condescension, your Lordship might very soon inform yourself, that the young fellow you have now thought proper to deride, was not born to the contempt he must unhappily sustain. How noble, how generous would it have been, for a youth of quality to have lifted such a one from obscurity, to have countenanced his merit, assisted

his necessities, and banished every bitter remembrance of calamity from his heart.

A scheme instantly suggested itself, (down on your knees, Arthur, and pray for its success) in consequence of which I made this unexpected reply.

All this, Miss Le Fever, I am ready to do on one concession, only let your connection with him be dissolved, and I will obtain a cure for him that shall exceed his best expectations, nor will I fail, upon any occasion, to be his warmest friend.

How, sir, demanded she, will your friendship display itself only in disuniting us; can you not be kind without being cruel; but we will owe no obligations to such a heart.

And do you think he is as heroic as yourself, madam, demanded I? no, Miss Le Fever, lovely as you are, the charms of preferment would be too powerful for him to resist; and he would forego his attachment to the one, to intitle himself to the other.

She appeared perplexed; she hesitated;

tated ; at length it may be so, my Lord, you are better skilled in the heart of man than myself. If you can prevail upon him to admit the utmost gifts of fortune to come in competition with his love, I have done. I wish him well ; and if you will provide for him, he is deserving, and I will not prove an impediment.

There's a girl for you !

Let us then, my dear madam, said I, wave all animosities for the present, and join our forces to bring this young gentleman's (I got it out, Arthur, with some difficulty) affection to the test ; will you write, or shall I ?

It is a mortifying undertaking, returned she, with a tender sigh ; for if I am not greatly deceived, I shall only occasion him much affliction ; and if I am, but I will write, my Lord, and you yourself shall be witness to the contents of my letter. You will please, however, to understand, that I do it for his sake, not yours, nor will I ever see you more when the business is compleated.

We will talk of that another time, madam ; it is sufficient that we now carry the first part of your resolution into practice. She took a piece of paper, and with an unsteady hand, as well as a rebelliously agitated heart, (against me, her adorer) wrote as follows :

To Mr. LECESTER.

SIR,

“ A FRIEND of good Mrs. Leeson's, having heard of your merit and misfortunes, proposes to reward the one, and wipe out the memory of the other, by becoming your patron. It certainly is in his power to do great things for you, and it would be inconsistent with the friendship I bear you, not to promote your real interest.

“ But there is a condition that may perhaps rather startle you on a first view : — all your expectations respecting me must utterly terminate, if you accept of his offer. Yet surely that is a light evil in comparison of many you now experience.

ence. Fortune is the key to every felicity ; and you may at some future period rejoice in the dissolution of a connection, that would inevitably be productive of many inconveniences.

“ You must enquire no farther, but give me leave to assure you, my private approbation (no small support for your pride) will ever be yours : I have no other attachment in view : my heart is not quite so pliant as to be capable of receiving every impression my friends might chuse to give it ; nor will I judge so lightly of yours, as to suppose you can forget me in an instant : it must be the work of time ; and what is it that time cannot accomplish.

“ You can have no notion of the advantages you will derive from this great man’s favor ; and the only disadvantage it will expose you to, is the loss of my correspondence, for my best wishes will ever be yours.

I am, &c.

C. LE FEVER.

I cannot say I am satisfied with what she has wrote : there is a tender ambiguity that runs through the whole, that will work upon the sensibility ; but as she would not be persuaded either to add or diminish one tittle, I was obliged to submit ; and have only the general *clerical* spirit, and the loud demands of poverty to rely upon.

She folded it up, on my returning it into her hands, sealed it, sighed a second time, and begged the favor of Jenny to convey it to the post. I could have wished to make some additions and improvements, tho', I suppose, the Levite would have betrayed me ; besides, I had no opportunity to give Jenny an item, and she had not the grace to reserve it for my perusal.

We now chatted of indifferent things ; and as my behaviour was, to the last degree, distant and civilized, she did not assume any airs. I could nevertheless perceive that the curate run dreadfully in her head ; but I hope he has sense, and I shall

shall know how to deal with her I will answer for it.

When Mrs. Leeson returned, I begged to speak with her in private, having first a very plausible excuse for being found with the young lady.

Madam, said I, affecting the prettiest confusion imaginable, I suppose you may have observed how greatly I admire Miss Le Fever, and I have too much principle to form dishonourable designs ; but I have reason to apprehend that even my most justifiable addresses would be rejected by her. A little parson, you must know him, one Leceister, is the happy man, that is to bear away the prize ; but she was surely born for a very different situation than the wretched one he would reduce her to ; she deserves the utmost gifts of fortune.

Are you serious, my Lord, returned Mrs. Leeson ? can you really determine to marry a worthy young woman without one pecuniary recommendation ?

Why not, my dear madam, cried I,
with

with a warmth that was apparently agreeable to her? some noblemen have suffered themselves to become unmindful of every consideration but person: that charge cannot, however, be brought against me in this instance; for has not Miss Le Fever the most exalted mind that ever woman possessed? but you shall hear my plan. I will wait upon Lady Catherine Oldham, make her the compliment of consulting her, and perhaps she may, by this time, be ashamed of her conduct: and should she receive the worthy girl once more into her favor, many advantages might be derived from it.

It was very plain, Arthur, that Mrs. Leeson could have hugged me for my ingenuity; she applauded, she promoted my design; and here am I at twelve o'clock at night, in my own apartment, with a positive resolution to wait upon her Ladyship to-morrow morning.

We shall soon see how matters will work: I shall not think it a misfortune to do without your assistance; I am gay,
I

I am enterprising, but I do not love pre-meditated baseness.

I fancy I have at last given the effectual stroke, and dug a pit for myself instead of the curate ; for this matrimonial scheme has no other charms for me, but that it is my ultimate resource, Liberty, liberty, O sweet liberty ; tho' I am not so prophane as even to wish to resist my destiny.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER XXII.

From the same to the same.

REALLY, Arthur, this same Lady Catherine Oldham has proved herself to be a very reasonable, persuadable being.

She received me with that politeness I might expect from a woman of her rank, who was not unacquainted with my family ; and I amused her some time upon common subjects, from not knowing how to begin my most interesting one.

At

At length, madam, said I, has not Miss Le Fever the honour to be related to you?

My Lord, returned she, with a face as red as scarlet, I little apprehended any incivility from you. I never can converse with any person who can mention so offensive a name to me; and I must tell you, that if you are come to plead for such an ingrate, your undertaking will be attended with the success it deserves.

I intreat your Ladyship —

—My Lord, I am not to be intreated: I suppose her poverty has at last taught her a lesson I wished her to learn; but she cast off my protection, it was not withdrawn, sir, and no arguments on earth shall ever retrieve it. If she is as wretched as guilt and penury can make her, my wrongs are but slightly atoned. I cherished her, I considered her as my own child; she nobly requited me, and there I must insist upon the matters resting forever.

In one word, Lady Catherine, said I,
it

it is not for Miss Le Fever but myself that I would obtain your interest; she is superior to misfortune, and tho' she regrets the loss of your favour —

—Regrets, repeated the violent Lady.

That, madam, resumed I, is not the present question. You know my estate is not exceptionable: I cannot enjoy it without her participation, nor would I thrust myself into your family without your consent.

You have charmed away my rage, my Lord, returned the Lady, with an intire new set of features. I must, I shall be proud of your alliance. Kitty has many perfections, and one infirmity ought to be forgiven, tho' it was a most flagrant one.

Your Ladyship must excuse my not inveighing against it for many reasons. It is a kind of proverb, that a good daughter will be a good wife; and if that is true, Miss Le Fever bids fair to render me the happiest of men.

I will not dispute with you, sir, said her Ladyship, rather nettled, but what settle-

fettlements do you propose; you shall not boast that you have taken a pennylefs beauty to wife; seven thousand pounds shall be daid down by me on the day of marriage; and perhaps I may bestow double the sum upon Lady Clerage at my death.

You shall have the whole direction of these matters, madam, returned I; I will order my lawyer to wait upon you to-morrow morning. But now give me leave to enquire whether you will allow the Lady to pay her respects to you in her present or future condition.

Your Lordship's consideration is very grateful to me; I recollect I vowed never more to receive Kitty Le Fever into my house, but that, by no means, extends to Lady Clerage.

Will you then condescend to write, madam?

With all my heart, said she; but beginning—dear,—dear what?—cried she—Kitty Le Fever:—no, my Lord, you must transact the whole affair for me;
tell

tell her with what pleasure I shall receive her in her new character, and as a token of my regard, let the lawyer read the deeds to her.

I left her Ladyship, after a little further conversation, in the highest spirits, and hurried to town, in order to pursue a more difficult and uncertain point, than even her wayward fancy.

I shall never succeed, Arthur, with this romantic-headed girl, unless the fellow has more wisdom than I am afraid has fallen to his share. Should he prove an *Anthony*, I am a very wretch, and must fly the country.

I am, &c.

C L E R A G E.

LETTER XXIII.

From the same to the same.

IF you do not pity me, Arthur, you are an absolute barbarian. The fellow has taken fire at the proposal, and
will

will *burn* up all my bright schemes in an instant.

He was seated, I suppose, in the awkward chimney corner of his ancestors, when Miss Le Fever's letter reached him. What rage, what turmoil, did it not occasion in his miserable breast? he orders a post-chaise immediately, tho' perhaps with only six-pence in his pocket, and the next evening sets him down at the door of his beloved.

What a meeting! O that he had but at that instant been lodged in the arms of the grimest of tyrants. Miss Le Fever fainted; Mrs. Le Fever squalled; Jenny wept bitterly, both at the period, and the relation of the affecting scene. Poor Mrs. Leeson was struck all of a heap, (out of regard to me, Arthur) and the unpleasings of Mrs. Stubbs's face, was redoubled by a grin of horror and dismay.

Miss Le Fever, cried young *Pomposo*, explain, this instant explain to me, the meaning of your cruel letter. What are preferments, patronage, or wealth, without

out your favour. I will renounce you only with my latest breath, nor can you either with honour or justice require so unnatural a sacrifice. Have you not taught me to rely upon your stability, nor shall you forfeit your pretensions to that valuable endowment, for any mistaken advantages I might derive from a new connection.

Jenny could remember very little more than that Mrs. Le Fever attended Mrs. Leeson down stairs, in order to account for the pathetics she had been witness of, and the lovers were left to themselves without interruption.

So you find, Arthur, I am at last become a pimp to the priest; but he must oblige me in turn, and accompany you in some little expedition.

When self is at the bottom, how industrious it renders us. Poor Jenny, Jenny, is beyond measure afflicted, lest Miss Le Fever will not marry my Lord, as her refusal would cut her out of her flattering expectations of being my *Lady's woman*.

Miss

Miss in the country pleaded for Lord Clerage, in order to give herself an opportunity of flying about with her *Ladyship*: but how shall we account for my fair mistress's conduct, she will be a beggar in spite of all I can say, tho' her best incitement to so preposterous an election can be only the punishing of me. She shall not, however, triumph long: this calm shall be succeeded by the most terrible of storms: so let them enjoy their little hour, Johnson, for you must dispose of him by some means or other until she is Lady Clerage.

I waited upon Mrs. Leeson this morning, to acquaint her with the success of my visit to Lady Catherine.

It is whimsical enough, that your poor old withered matrons should attempt to make prosylites: such lips as Miss Le Fever's might persuade me to any thing; but good Mrs. Leeson, with all her pathos and eloquence, is only good Mrs. Leeson, and a very elderly gentlewoman.

She shook her head at my report.

What

What pity it is, said she, that such generous intentions should be frustrated; but Miss Le Fever has thought proper to chuse for herself, nor can I blame her, a more agreeable young fellow perhaps never existed.

He is as insinuating, at least, returned I (somewhat hurt you may be certain) but if we cannot work upon her constancy, we must have a tryal of skill with him. If he has either honour or love, he will not be the means of obscuring such bright prospects: you know, madam, he has nothing but wretchedness in his power.

Miss Le Fever, said the good old lady, very composedly, is not that sort of person to be dazzled with —

But, madam, cried I, for I could not contain myself when she began to talk nonsense, she has so much duty and tender consideration for her mother, that it might greatly influence her to find she espoused my interest. Shall I send for her

her

her down, and communicate the steps I have taken.

Mrs. Le Fever soon made her appearance.

I am certain, madam, said I, you have so much goodness that you can pardon the most extravagant conduct, when merely dictated by affection for your amiable daughter.

I then set forth all I had said and done at Lady Catherine's, concluding with a declaration, that all my hopes of happiness were hinged upon obtaining her consent and approbation.

She was affected, she was distressed. Alas! sir, said she, it is unfortunate that you should have fixed upon such humble minds as ours: to gratitude we shall ever be alive; but there is no temptations that can rouse us to ambition. My poor girl has already been so great a sufferer by her connections with nobility, that the very name is hateful to her; and I do believe, one principal motive of her present attachment, was a similarity of fate and fortune.

tune. I do not know how to act; I approve Mr. Leceister, and honour your Lordship, but I have been ever of opinion, that to promote my child's happiness is my duty, and to use my authority to interrupt or impede it a most unjustifiable step. I will mention what you say to my daughter, but to promise to enforce it, my Lord, would be to deceive you: she has acquired a right, from her uncommon tenderness to me, (her natural one out of the question) to follow her own inclinations.

But will you not advise her, madam, cried I, will you not try to persuade her?

With a delicate mind, my Lord, replied this affectionate mother, advice is controul, and persuasion compulsion: you must excuse me; I cannot run the hazard of ruining my child's peace. If Mrs. Leeson will undertake your cause, I will wish it all the success that is compatible with my grand object, my poor girl's felicity; but no farther will either my fin-

cerity or tender regard for my Kitty permit me to go.

What a foolish wrong-headed woman, did you or I ever conceive that any such existed. Title, fortune, equipage, all contemned ; nay, the declared impediments to the union. The miserable curate was not under the necessity of suing with half the servility I have done. There is now no longer time for hesitation ; spare no expence, no care of my execrable rival—I am distracted, and there is no remedy. I leave every thing to your own management ; you must exempt me from all odious consultations, and bear me witness that I have left no one means untried to have secured myself from villainy.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

O Polly, it is impossible for you to conceive what I have endured since I last wrote to you. Lord Clerage, but he is calculated for such unworthy practices; and if he cannot rob you of your innocence, will strike at your repose.

Poor Mr. Leceister and I had only exchanged one or two tender epistles, before this formidable merciless man rose up to torment us. I had been compelled, as I informed you, to pass one afternoon in his company, which was *hardly* enough sustained, but I little suspected he would have so soon repeated his visit.

My mother, Mrs. Leeson, and Mrs. Stubbs, having some business to draw them from home, (for to assist the indigent and relieve the distressed, they have all a peculiar turn) I intended to have devoted

the hours of their absence to poor Mr. Leceister : but before I could accommodate myself with proper materials for the only conversation we could then enjoy, who should enter my apartment, after a slight familiar tap at the door, but the bold Lord Clerage.

Astonished at the rencounter, I believe I accosted him with very little ceremony : he fawned, I fretted ; but as he insisted upon being heard a few words, I ordered Mrs. Stubb's servant to wait within call, as I have really too ill an opinion of him to trust myself one moment in his power : he raved at the indignity, but was forced to submit.

You cannot imagine how he treated me, made Mr. Leceister's circumstances his sport, and at the long run insinuated, that as fond as he appeared of me, set but a good living before him, and I should soon find which would be most charming in his estimation ; offering to do many extraordinary things for him, if once he was unconnected with me.

I almost dispise myself for my folly ; for as sure as you are alive, I was so weak as to be piqued to such a degree, as to begin to think it very possible that a prospect of advancement might have its allurements, and suffered myself to be prevailed upon to propose the exchange to the greatly-injured young gentleman ; for what can be a greater injury than entertaining unjust and ungenerous suspicions of any one.

I wrote a most curious letter, my dear, tho' it was daggers to my own heart ; for to have been deserted by Mr. Leceister would have been the cruellest of all my misfortunes.

I was not insensible of his Lordship's views for inciting me to so strange a step ; but was pre-determined, if I found poor Leceister frail, never more to behold the face of man with approbation.

The letter was dispatched : two sleepless nights and three anxious days did I experience. I concluded all was over ; but

would rather have died than betrayed my disappointment and affliction.

The third evening however, my dear Polly, brought me a blessed evidence of my error ; it brought me (it is the only exultation my heart ever felt) the amiable Leceister upon his knees before me to solicit an explanation of such bitter lines. To see him was new life ; but to see him so earnestly, so tenderly affected, was too much for me to support, and for a few moments deprived me of all sensibility.

I soon recovered, and Lord Clerage was a living proof how intirely the malicious defeat their own purposes ; for never did I taste more flattering delight, than in the repeated assurances of Mr. Leceister's unalterable affection.

Nor will his ill-intended officiousness be productive only of that single advantage. Mr. Leceister will not be prevailed upon to revisit the country, and each returning day will renew my happiness.

But do not suppose his Lordship has
done

done with us ; he is still working on, tho' with as little success as heretofore.

How endearing is my mother's tenderness ? ah, my good girl, depend upon it few children would fly from the protection of reasonable parents, but what will not persecution hurry us into. We ought not to dispose of ourselves without the concurrence of these most valuable relations ; yet surely no tie is sufficient to engage us to sacrifice our persons and inclinations, to gratify the humour or prejudice of any one.

This *noble* Lord has, it seems, been tampering with the great Lady Catherine, who is ready to join hands with him to deprive me of every real satisfaction, and would palm their imaginary ones upon me : but I am not to be so easily taken in. I have been behind the scenes, my girl, have viewed the puppets in their natural state, and never was there more empty, unprofitable, unsatisfied beings under the sun. Seven thousand pounds (methinks

her Ladyship bids high) is ready to purchase me a coach and fix, provided I am not so simple as to hesitate about deceiving or breaking a worthy heart. Your poor folks are so numerous and inconsiderable a body, that it is no matter how hastily or by what means they are dispatched; but you and I are of another opinion, and Leceister shall be our man of men.

I should be sorry to be precipitated into an abrupt marriage: but to put a final period to the schemes of my worst enemy Lord Clerage, I could be almost willing to try the evils of that condition that is ever in extremes, extremely happy or extremely miserable.

I am, &c.

C. LE FEVER.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

ARTHUR JOHNSON, *Esq;* to Lord CLERAGE.

THE parson will no longer impede Lord Clerage's wishes; he is safely disposed of, beyond all possibility of discovery or escape.

I shall leave London the moment I have dispatched this letter; and can only now congratulate your Lordship upon the success of a rather desperate undertaking, and will hereafter avail myself of his generous promises to

His Lordship's, &c.

H. JOHNSON.

LETTER XXVI.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

MISS Le Fever is most unhappily deprived of her darling Leceister:

K 5

he

he has, Sir George, unexpectedly absented himself, from what cause or on what occasion who can divine. Should her suspicions fall upon me, how should I exculpate myself; that I loved her and hated him, is sufficiently notorious to furnish her with a foundation.

Let me have your opinion, your advice, it is an unlucky accident; for I suppose if even time should lessen the sense, without redressing the misfortune that now hangs so heavy on this young lady's heart, I should never be permitted to make my appearance; and all this because I was unable to enter into the notion of the people who had not bread to eat, bellowing for a painted baby: yet you will find he can live without her, tho' his honour (your half-starved heroes are most laughable characters) would not allow him to say he renounced her.

The affair has, however, thrown me into great perplexity, and will perhaps deprive

prive me of the privilege I have so long enjoyed of subscribing myself

Yours, &c.

CLERAGE.

L E T T E R XXVII.

Miss LE FEVER to Miss WINTER.

THE whole day has passed and no Mr. Leceister : sure no misfortune has befallen him : he has but few acquaintance in town, and those of too little consequence to induce him to disappoint me of his company for their sakes.

I am born for every species of misery : if I should never see him more—but that is folly—yet if he comes safe, and cannot make a very sufficient excuse for his absence, how shall I reconcile my pride to the unexpected neglect.

Now am I beginning to enter into the cares ; and tho' I have tasted only a few of the pleasures this flattering connection

is capable of, it is in vain, my dear, to repine at the common lot of humanity, for if we have not our mortifications of one kind, we have of another. Better be forsaken, says somebody, (I am not so clear-headed at present as to tell you who) than never to have been loved ; but I will not hold with that opinion : it was not, however, an affair of my own seeking, Providence seems to have cast me into it, and therefore I will submit.

Morning, 10 o'Clock.

STILL no Mr. Leceister ! what will become of me ! restrained as I am from all complaint, no less by modesty than tender regard for the best of mother's.

He has certainly met with some accident, and perhaps languishes amongst strangers, unable to acquaint them who he is. My dear mother is so humane to every creature in distress, that I need not doubt her concurrence to assist him under any unhappy circumstances.

THE

THE misery, my dear girl, is all revealed ; and what makes it beyond measure insupportable is, that it cannot be alleviated. I never can contain myself, my reason or my heart will be subdued : but I know the hand from whence this calamity is derived.—I will—I will—but read and judge if you can of my unutterable affliction.

To Miss LE FEVER.

My dear madam,

“ I AM fallen they tell me into honourable hands ; and have been permitted (as my apprehensions for your sufferings on my account were strong and alarming) at length to inform you, that I shall be safely nay advantageously disposed of, but must never see you again. May that power that presides over innocence and virtue, forever protect and defend you. I must not tell you how much I am your's,

P. LECEISTER.”

To

To have survived him would have been a gentle stroke to this. Conveyed away, doomed perhaps to a miserable state of slavery, and all on my account: but I will not endure the bitter reflection; and yet my dearest mother what will become of you, when you behold your wretched child sinking into the grave.

Mrs. Leeson, the good the humane Mrs. Leeson, (that I could but forget her relationship to that monster) is the best of women. She promises to be our never-failing friend—nay not even her death shall deprive us of a comfortable provision: but can she restore my peace? can she?

Something must be done: a bold and daring action: no matter; whilst I now write it may be too late. Adieu, adieu, pray for the success of my undertaking, my everlasting happiness depend upon it.

I am, &c.

C. LE FEVER.

LETTER

LETTER XXVIII.

Lord CLERAGE to Sir GEORGE HENDON.

O Hendon, all covered as I am with guilt and affliction, in what language shall I address you. A villain may assist, a villain may flatter, a villain may execute ; but it is to such hearts as yours alone, that I can fly for pity and consolation.

I doubt not but your discernment has anticipated my confession : the marks were strong upon me : why am I thus unable to support either a just or base character with uniformity ? I am unquestionably the most unhappy and absurd of all compositions.

That I have been the direct author of the calamity my sweet woman so pathetically deplores, I need not speak in plainer terms. To save myself from the last wretchedness I was so mean as to enter into
bonds

bonds with the greatest of monsters, who has infinitely out-run my worst intention.

Take a description, my friend, of the consequences, but allow me forever to be silent respecting the particulars of the base transaction.

I was this morning in my study, my soul in a very uneasy state, when a servant hastily informed me, that a young lady insisted upon speaking with me. She says your Lordship knows her well, added he, and her name is Le Fever. We would not permit her to alight without orders, especially as she appears wild and dejected.

Where is she, exclaimed the guilty wretch : shew me to her ; 'tis I alone that can speak peace to her poor wounded heart.

I found by the fellow's countenance that my expressions had surprised him, and was endeavouring to collect myself into some kind of composure, during which short moment Miss Le Fever had
pre-

prevailed upon my people to admit her into the house, and she was immediately before my mortified eyes.

My Lord, said she, on my knees, on my knees I conjure you to compassionate my misery. My reason is certainly shook — Mr. Leceister — release him from his present situation, or your sins will be spread out on the face of the earth. My mother and Mr. Leceister, I would die to preserve them; and here I voluntarily offer (if you can accept my person under its grief and deformity) to comply with whatever terms you can propose to obtain his liberty. I will never see him but once again, just to satisfy myself that he is not languishing out his existence for my transgressions, and will then marry you, live with you, love and bless you.

Rise Miss Le Fever, said I, that supplicating attitude ill-befits you. Whatever is in my power —

—O talk not of power, cried she, with the utmost earnestness, will you not save me

me from destruction. Look on me, my Lord, am I not the creature you so lately professed to admire? will not Lady Catherine bestow seven thousand pounds to recommend me to your favour, tho' she would not part with a shilling to relieve my dying mother? Take me, take me then, I will be the most obedient, the tenderest of wives, only deliver that innocent sufferer from bondage. I will not rise, repeated she, (I had made many attempts, George, to raise her from so unworthy a situation) I will not quit this spot, until you assure me Mr. Leceister shall be restored to liberty and his friends.

Indeed, Miss Le Fever, returned I, I am grieved to my soul to behold you in this condition, especially as I cannot relieve you from it. I could not confess myself a villain, Hendon, but you can have no idea of my horror and remorse.

My Lord, said she, rivetting her eyes upon me, do you believe there is a God? do not now deceive me, as you hope for
mercy

mercy at his hands ; for be assured, the cause of injured innocence will not go unpunished, nor the tears of wretchedness fail to prevail against you. I suppose you have so much humanity as to start at actual murder : your sword that would relieve me from the bitterest of pangs, you could not lift up against me without shuddering. Yet you can behold the anguish of my soul unmoved ; can reflect upon the woes my widowed mother must endure, with barbarous resolution ; and steel your heart against the miserable complaints of a being you have so basely trepanned.

Your pride, my Lord, your false sense of honour are still alive ; they at this very moment flush your cheek, and dart upon me from your eye ; and shall your humanity sleep ? my accusation has called forth the one, oh let my misery rouse the other. Your compassion, your all-relieving compassion, let it revive in your breast, and rectify the evils you have occasioned.

I will forever haunt you with my intreaties, until I have subdued your stubborn nature, and you consent to give me back to tranquility and peace.

Only compose yourself, my dear Miss Le Fever, said I, in the utmost distress, and I will endeavour—only compose yourself, (for she was again flying out) and I will serve you. Permit me to seat you—be soothed—be satisfied—you shall see him again, and I will no longer persecute you. I will promote your union; provide handsomely for him, and you shall live to bless the present object of your greatest detestation.

By degrees she lost the alarming fierceness of her aspect: her language became easy and intelligent; and I prevailed upon her to rest satisfied that I would exert my utmost abilities in her service.

And so I will, Sir George; I am scared with hobgoblins, and the most frightful of chimeras.

But

But should the young fellow, as I much apprehend, be far beyond my reach, I wonder who will be the greatest wretch, the injurer or the injured.

My heart tells me we are all undone; my good inclinations, my honest resolutions, are come too late. Villain that I am, will heaven to chastise me, permit all these innocent people to be involved in one common ruin.

I know not where to find the vile executioner of my vile purposes, nor have I the least clue to the finding out the young fellow. I know not how to proceed: but I fly, if possible, to repair my crime: the attitude, the features, the wild, yet pathetic manner, of the distressed, the distracted Le Fever, will never be out of my remembrance. Without doubt she loves this man, in the same degree I love her.—Perdition — but she must, she must be saved; for I am not yet arrived at that
pitch

pitch of cruelty, to exult in her unmerited sufferings ; nor can you despise me more than I do myself.

I am, &c.

CLERAGE.

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

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